

# What Is Practice Period?

## ***Zazenshin: The Accupuncture Needle of Zazen***

Once, when the Great Master Hongdao of Yueshan was sitting (in meditation) a monk asked him, “What are you thinking of (sitting there) so fixedly?” The Master answered, “I’m thinking of not thinking.” The monk asked, “How do you think of not thinking?” The Master answered, “Nonthinking.”

Practice period is a time to deepen one’s commitment to practice by exploring just what practice is for you. During this time, we take on some more formal practice, deepening quiet. This last time, we will return to our roots and study the fascicle that informs the name of our sangha, *Zazenshin*. We will deeply explore-what is the point of this zazen anyway? Practice Period can also be characterized by an intention to practice with a precept such as not harboring ill will or a paramita such as generosity or patience. Practice Period is deeply refreshing.

In the Buddha’s time, during the rainy season the monks would gather to practice and study as a group. This time of reflection continued in monastic practice in China and Japan. It has traditionally been 90 days long. This is the length of a practice period at Tassajara. At urban Centers practice periods often last 6-8 weeks and end with a sesshin. For us, an urban and lay sangha, it is 7 weeks. This time is a gift to ourselves. When we can drop anything unnecessary and let ourselves drop into zazen and practice. Of course, it is an indirect gift to our families and others given our experience of letting go. Family and work must remain priorities but what can you let go of for these few weeks? Facebook, Mystery Novels, YouTube, TV or streaming series? I encourage you to give yourself and your family this gift of commitment to practice that Practice Period represents.

Accompanying this explanation is a calendar with the practice events for the practice period. Please review it and then fill out the statement of intention if you would like to participate in some way. Before filling out the intention statement, please think about what is realistic for you. It is useful for practice period to be a stretch but not if it is unrealistic. So, do not commit to more than you can do. Better to commit to a bit less and do extra than to commit to too much and then feel bad.

Practice Period is a good time for you to commit to more zazen for yourself, mornings or evenings. Zazen is offered Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. On Saturday mornings, there is a longer early zazen period, an hour, with a short interval in the middle. That means you can sit through or stand or change position during the interval.. On Wednesday evenings October 25 and November 1, for the check-in before the Bodhisattva Ceremony, we will use a Council format, with a “talking stone” held by the person talking.

The Practice Period will end with a five-day sesshin, November 15-19. If you cannot come during the days you work, please consider coming morning and/or evening to encourage those sitting and to deepen your own practice during those days. Then, sit the days you can. On Sunday, November 19, there will be a Shosan Ceremony. All in the Practice Period are encouraged to come ask the teacher a dharma question. Please try to come to this ceremony if you are in the Practice Period whether or not you are in the sesshin. It will begin at 3:30 p.m. and will close the sesshin and our final Practice Period. All events will be hybrid, also on Zoom.

The class, on Wednesday evenings, will be based on a classic Dogen teaching, *Zazenshin: The Accupuncture Needle of Zazen*. You can find a great translation of Carl Bielefeldt online at <https://terebeess.hu/zen/dogen/KS-Zazenshin.html>. You may

need to scroll a bit to get to the text. I will also provide a good translation by Kaz from his translation of the Shobogenzo.

On October 21, we will have a Sangha Samu Day to take deep care of our temple. Don't forget our wonderful Sejiki, November 8, honoring the Hungry Ghosts, along with the party that follows. The party is also Practice Period Skit Night so come prepared to share your talent. More about this later.

## Practice Period Calendar 2023

### Regular schedule:

**Monday:** 6:20 a.m.(formal)

**Tuesday:** 6:20 a.m. (formal) and 5:40 p.m. (informal)\*

**Wednesday:** 6:20 a.m. and 5:40 p.m. (both formal)\*

**Thursday:** 6:20 a.m. (formal)

**Friday:** 6:20 a.m. (formal) and 5:40 p.m. (informal)

**Saturday:** 8:00 a.m.-11:45 a.m: one hour zazen, with interval, service and short break; continuing with 9:30 zazen, short *soji* and Saturday lecture.

### Special Schedule:

#### September:

23 Buddy choosing 11:15 a.m. after lecture.

30 One Day Sit (6:30 a.m.-8:45 p.m.) PP Open at 6:00 p.m.)

#### October:

4 Class after service at 6:10 pm , short break, so, 6:20-7:30

11 Class after service at 6:10 pm , short break, so, 6:20-7:30

18 Class after service at 6:10 pm , short break, so, 6:20-7:30

21 Sangha Samu Day 9:30a.m.-3 p.m. (no early progra

25 Full Moon Ceremony/Class: Zazen 5:40-6:00, Council/check-in 6-6:20, Ceremony 6:20-6:45. Class 6:45-7:45

#### November:

1 Class after service at 6:10 pm , short break, so, 6:20-7:30

8 Sejiki/Skit Night 4:30 p.m. altar prep/5:40 zazen/  
6:20ceremony/6:45 skit night

15-19 Sesshin (6:30 a.m.-8:45 p.m. except Sunday ends with Shosan at 3:30 pm

19 Shosan Ceremony 3:30 p.m. (All in Practice Period are welcome)

\*Formal sitting means more formal clothing and service, usually 40 minute period. Informal means less formal clothing and no service, usually 30 minute period

## Statement of Intention

(Please give to Mary and  
tell her if you want a copy)

On the statement of intention, you might want to think about a theme for yourself, such as “right speech” or something in your daily life. It is also fine to simply stay with your breath and body. At the end of the statement, there is a question about any other commitment you may wish to make. Some of you might want to commit to sitting at home because of commute difficulties etc. Or you may need to use Zoom. We will again use a system of “practice buddies” during this Practice Period. This means you will draw the name of someone with whom to be accountable for sitting each day and/or for study and/or for practice with intention. We will have a brief orientation meeting to discuss and choose practice buddies after lecture on September 23.

Please see me or call if you have any questions or you want some support in deciding about what commitment to make during the Practice Period.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

In general, what is your intention for this practice period?

Which events will you participate in?

Orientation/Oryoki Instruction/Buddy drawing 9/23

One-Day Sitting 9/30 with Opening Ceremony at 6:00 p.m.

Morning Zazen: Mon-Fri 6:20-7:10 a.m. (includes service)

Evening Zazen: Tu/Fri 5:40-6:10 p.m. (no service)

Wed 5:40-7:30 or 7:45 p.m. Zazen, service, class (some special events)

Saturday Morning early program 8:00-9:30

Saturday Morning regular 9:30-11:45 program zazen, *soji*, lecture, and tea

Class: Wednesdays 10/4, 11, 18, 25 and 11/1 (all classes at 6:30 or a bit later p.m. after service or special events)

Full Moon Ceremony before class 10/25 and 11/1, Council-style check-in, ceremony 6:20.

Sangha Samu Day 10/21 9:30a.m.-3:00 p.m. (no early program)

Sejiki/Skit Night 11/8 4:45 p.m. altar prep/5:40 zazen/6:20 ceremony/6:45 skit night

Sesshin 11/15-19

11/ 19 Shosan 3:30 p.m.

Is there some other commitment you wish to make, such as sitting at home? If so, what is it?

# One Day Sitting Schedule

6:30-7:10 am	Zazen
7:10-7:20	Kinhin
7:20 -7:50	Zazen
7:50-8:15	Service
8:15-9:00	Breakfast
9:00-9:30	Break
9:30-10:05	Zazen
10:05-10:10	Kinhin
10:10-11:00	Lecture
11:00-11:10	Kinhin
11:10-11:50	Zazen
11:50-12:00 p.m.	Kinhin
12:00-12:30	Zazen
12:30-12:40	Service
12:40-1:25	Lunch
1:25-2:15	Break
2:15-3:45	Silent Work Period
3:45-3:55	Clean-Up
3:55-4:20	Tea
4:20-6:00	Zazen (open period)
6:00-6:10	Service to open Practice Period
6:10-6:50	Dinner
6:50-7:10	Break
7:10-7:40	Zazen
7:40-8:10	Special Jukai
8:10-8:40	Zazen
8:40	Refuges

