

What Is Practice Period?

For Zen students, the most important thing is not to be dualistic. Our “original mind” includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything: it is open to everything. In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.

Practice Period is a time to deepen one’s commitment to practice by exploring just what practice is for you. The theme will grow out of Zen Mind Beginner’s Mind. We take on some more formal practice, deepening quiet. It is a great opportunity to experience sitting more. We will offer informal zazen on Tuesday and Friday evenings, in addition to the usual Wednesdays. Zazen on Saturday mornings will be longer and we will offer zazen and service each weekday morning. All will be hybrid. This zazen is profoundly nourishing.

In the Buddha’s time, during the rainy season the monks would gather together to practice and study as a group. This time of reflection continued in monastic practice in China and Japan and the west. It has traditionally been 90 days long. At urban Centers practice periods often last 6-8 weeks and end with a sesshin. This one will be 7 weeks. We will have Practice Period buddies, assigned by drawing from a hat, after zazen on Wednesday the 29th. A buddy is meant to encourage and be encouraged by you and to keep you company during the Practice Period.

Accompanying this explanation is a calendar with the practice events. Please review it and then fill out the statement of intention if you would like to participate in. Before filling out the 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 to 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. We will begin on October 2 with a One-Day Sitting and an Opening of Practice Period Ceremony at evening service. We will begin at 6:30 a.m. and end at 8:40 p.m. We will offer buffet breakfast and dinner and trays to take your food to eat far enough away from others to be able to take off your mask. Lunch will be bag/vegetarian. On Wednesday evening October 20, for the check-in before the Full Moon Ceremony, we will use a Council format, with a “talking object” held by the person talking.

The class, on Wednesday evenings, will be based on Zen Mind Beginner’s Mind. We will focus on four fascicles from the Right Practice section: Posture, Mind Waves, The Marrow of Zen and Bowing. As you know, this book by Suzuki Roshi is the foundation of our practice.

On October 16, we will have a Sangha Samu Day to take deep care of our temple. We will sit outside and work far enough apart. All are welcome, suitably masked. Don’t forget our wonderful Sejiki, November 10, 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.

The Practice Period will end with a five-day sesshin, November 17-21. If you cannot join during the days you work, please consider joining 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 21, the Practice Period and sesshin will end with a Shosan Ceremony, in which students ask dharma questions that reflect their practice. 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 the Practice Period.

Practice Period Calendar 2021

Regular schedule: (All Hybrid)

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) 5:40 p.m. (informal)

Saturday: 8:00-11:30 a.m.: one hour open zazen, service, short break, then 9:30 zazen, soji, lecture and tea.

Special Schedule: (All Hybrid)

September:

29 Sangha Meeting: Orientation and Buddy Choosing (5:40 p.m. zazen followed by meeting)

October:

2 One Day Sit (6:30 a.m.-8:40 p.m.) PP Open at 6:00 p.m.

6 Class after service at 6:10, short break, and class from 6:30-7:30

13 Class after service at 6:10, short break, and class from 6:30-7:30

16 Sangha Samu Day 9:30a.m.-3 p.m. All are welcome.

20 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

27 Class after service at 6:10, short break, and class from 6:30-7:30

November:

3 Class after service at 6:10, short break, and class from 6:30-7:30

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

17-21 Sesshin 6:30 a.m.-8:40 p.m. Wed-Sat; Sunday ends Shosan 3:30

21 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. 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 Sangha meeting to include choose buddies on Wednesday September 29 at 6:10 after zazen.

Please contact me 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?

Sangha Meeting/Buddy drawing 9/29

One-Day Sitting 10/2 with Opening Ceremony 6:00

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 (includes zazen and service)

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

Class: Wednesdays 10/6, 13, 20, 27 and 11/3 (all classes at 6:30 or a bit later p.m. after service or special events)

Sangha Samu Day 10/16 9:30a.m.-3:00 p.m. (no early program)

Full Moon Ceremony before class 10/20, Council-style check-in at 6, ceremony 6:20.

Sejiki/Skit Night 11/10 4:45 p.m. altar prep/5:40 zazen/6:20 ceremony/6:45 skit night

Sesshin 11/17-21

11/21 Shosan 3:30 p.m. followed by close of Practice Period

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

If you know, who is your buddy and what commitment have you made to one another?