

## **Questions Frequently Asked by People When They Come to Austin Zen Center**

**I can't come at 5:30AM or even 6:15AM. But I'd like to meditate and chant some mornings.**

*Why don't you try coming at 7:00AM for our chanting and bowing service and then stay for a self-timed period of zazen following the soji (temple cleaning). Soji ends at 7:40AM, so a 1/2-hour of sitting following that would let you leave by 8:10AM. If you bring your breakfast with you, we'll supply the coffee and you can eat here and leave in time for work.*

**In the evening it is hard to get from my work to the center by 5:40PM. May I enter the zendo when I arrive?**

*Yes, come in quietly and join the sitting and stay for chanting and bowing and class or lecture*

**What happens at 6:30PM during the week?**

*There are four eight-week study sessions per year- fall, winter, spring and summer. Usually 3 classes are offered per session on Mondays, Tuesdays or Thursdays at 6:30PM either in the classroom across the street or the dining room, upstairs office, the sewing room, and occasionally in the Zendo itself. On Wednesday evenings there are lectures, or other dharma events. Most activities are over by 8:00 p.m. On certain days there is zazen for an hour (self timed periods of sitting and walking) starting at 8:00 p.m.*

**Do these activities cost money?**

*Zazen and chanting/bowing services are free for everyone. We invite you to become a member of AZC and pledge to support us over the year (Please see our membership brochure). Some classes and discussions are free (usually those taught by the head teacher) most other classes are \$35.00 for members and \$45.00 for others. (Members receive one free class per year). The Wednesday evening events are free. We request dana (donations) support for the center if you don't pledge and even if you do pledge we invite you to offer dana to visiting teachers. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.*

**I hear people talking about sewing. What is that about?**

*When a student/practitioner is ready to commit to precepts, being a practicing Buddhist, when a teacher and student have agreed that the student may be ordained as a priest, there are sewing activities associated with the preparation process.*

**What is the Saturday program?**

*On most Saturdays we offer beginner's instruction; zazen at 9:30AM and at 10:15AM. there is a lecture followed by discussion. On some Saturdays there are free classes on the Precepts, forms or chanting at at 8:30 a.m. or 11:30AM,*

**Who may use the library?**

*Anyone may read a book in the library. Members may check books out. Access to the library can be achieved by talking to a resident or office staff.*

**May I come and sit in the zendo at "off times"?**

*Yes, during weekdays, but not in the evening, some Saturday afternoons or Sundays. The center is closed during the afternoon Saturday and most of the day Sunday, so it would be hit or miss to find the building open.*

**Are there social and work opportunities at AZC?**

*Yes. It is important to keep abreast of activities via the website, list serve and bulletin board. We have workdays, work sesshins, potluck suppers and various other celebrations. We want you to be there! We do a vegetarian Thanksgiving potluck and a New Years Eve potluck and celebration.*

**What are one-day sittings, sesshins, silent sittings, rohatsu and segaki?**

*One-day sittings and sesshins are intensive sittings of one to seven days. Rohatsu is a seven-day sitting celebrating Buddha's enlightenment. Segaki is a ceremony near Halloween time in which we honor our dead and get rid of our "demons" in regards to some of our dead relatives and friends. Silent sesshins are usually held on "three-day holiday weekends". They run from 9 – 4, each person brings a lunch. There are no chanting services and very little structure. There is no cost for these sesshins and people are free to participate as they wish. Dana is requested.*

**What are the funny names for things? And how do you get to strike bells and drums?**

*Ask the Ino (zendo manager) to teach you and he/she will make sure you are able to participate in the bells and altar care. We use Japanese names and offer a glossary to help you with them. As you spend more time here you'll feel comfortable with these names.*

**Who "gets" to wear robes? What is the deal about what to wear?**

*Anyone may wear a lay robe or samugi (Japanese work clothes). There are particular things that priests must wear. We invite you to wear black or muted clothes for zazen.*

**Who "gets to be a resident"?**

*The resident program exists for people who are ready and able to commit the bulk of their time to the center, practice and teacher. When in residence a practitioner must sit the whole schedule and be available for most activities. It is a wonderful way to deepen practice and is available by application to the housing committee. Some people come for short stays (week or month) as guest students. Talk to the teacher or practice leader or resident manager if you are interested.*

**What about Sundays?**

*There are irregularly scheduled activities on Sundays. There is a zen and recovery group that meets at 5:00 p.m.. You'll have to check the web for special events, such as a beginners afternoon, guest teacher sesshin or workshop, one-time only class, film or other celebration.*

**What is required of me to be respected as a zen practitioner?**

*Your presence when you can come. Your wholehearted effort when practicing. Your sincere desire to explore the dharma with others. All people are welcome to participate. Children's programs and "baby sitting" can be arranged if there seem to be enough people interested in having childcare provided.*

**What is dokusan, practice leader, Teacher, priest, lay leader?**

*Dokusan is a formal meeting with the Teacher. Practice leaders are senior practitioners who offer practice discussion. The Teacher is the most senior practitioner. She is available for dokusan and informal meetings. A priest is someone who has committed to follow the ritual path, offer the dharma to others, train with the Teacher and usually will go for monastic training to a larger center. Many people who practice deeply and for a long time are not interested in becoming Zen priests. We value their leadership and look to them to assist the center in growing spiritually and physically.*

**What kinds of outreach activities are available?**

*We support wider community activities with a prison meditation program; offering meditation to other groups; participating in Austin Area Interreligious Ministries and Buddhist Peace Fellowship, teaching elsewhere, doing weddings and funerals and baby namings. We encourage a diverse sangha and will work actively to that end.*

***Welcome to the exciting journey of discovery. Please be open about questioning and letting us know if things bother you. Senior practitioners can help you with your concerns and if they can't they can steer you to the right person. Thank you for coming to Austin Zen Center. We want you to be here. Gassho.***

