

# BROOKLYN ZEN CENTER

Brooklyn Zen Center - An Open, Creative and Compassionate Community  
*Mission and Vision*

## **Our Mission**

The mission of Brooklyn Zen Center is to maintain a space for zazen and formal Soto Zen Buddhist practice, to offer a place to study Buddhist ethics and philosophy, and to embody the wisdom, compassion, and community of the Buddha as they have been carried down through our tradition, first established by Eihei Dogen Zenji in the 13th century and brought to us by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and our current guiding teacher and supporting teachers.

## **Envisioning a New Kind of Zen Center**

Brooklyn Zen Center's vision for carrying out this mission combines a deep respect for our Zen Buddhist tradition with an aim to respond to our New York community and the world as it is today. Zen has always valued a spirit of mindful spontaneity and creativity in its cultivation of compassion and wisdom. In this spirit, Brooklyn Zen Center engages and changes with our immediate environment and world from a place of receptivity and wholeness.

Brooklyn Zen Center plans to concentrate on three broad-reaching program areas. The first is a mindful, flexible continuance of our Soto Zen Buddhist practice tradition with which we have been entrusted. The second is a deep engagement and dialogue with the arts and artistic communities represented in our sangha and city. The third is a commitment to socially engaged programs designed to alleviate suffering in the world.

## **Zen Buddhism and Community-Centered Practice**

Though formal Zen training and practice with a guiding dharma teacher actively occurs at Brooklyn Zen Center – a relationship we believe to be invaluable – we hold that the practitioner is ultimately responsible for her or his own practice and that the dharma presents itself throughout any and all of life's activities.

To ensure the integrity of our lineage, Teah Strozer offers herself as a guiding teacher for our community. The leadership of Brooklyn Zen Center regularly consults with our guiding teacher regarding temple and organizational affairs. Other supporting teachers such as Norman Fischer also maintain teacher-student relationships with members of our community and visit throughout the year to teach, train and lead retreats.

Brooklyn Zen Center is committed to providing the following:

- Support of lay practice, including regular meditation hours, intensive retreats, and training in Zen Buddhist forms, ritual and activities.
- Instruction in sitting meditation, Zen Buddhist thought, ethics, arts and practice.
- Access to practice with Zen Buddhist teachers in the Suzuki Roshi lineage.

## **The Arts and an Open Space for Mindful Co-creation**

Aesthetics, being concerned with the sensory-emotional understanding of values and being, is of central interest to both artistic endeavor and Buddhist practice. In our meditation practice, we return to our feeling-based body wisdom over and over as the truth of our deeper mind unfolds more clearly.

With this in mind, a dialogue around the nexus of Zen and art offers exciting opportunities for understanding our true nature as human beings. We hope that by engaging many artistic disciplines we can explore self-attachment, mindful expression and aesthetic experience in a way that allows for a deeper, more natural stillness, awareness and compassion to arise.

Brooklyn Zen Center is committed to providing the following:

- A space for artistic practice, performance and inquiry where relationships between artistic endeavor, human development, self-attachment and mindfulness are explored.
- Opportunities for the practice and mastery of traditional Zen-related Japanese art forms.
- Education programs for children, teenagers, and adults designed to explore the arts in relationship to the dharma, meditation and mindful expression.

## **Social Engagement and Practicing in the World**

The Buddha's primary concern was the liberation from suffering. Consequently, all programs at Brooklyn Zen Center are developed with this as the ultimate aim. Though our efforts are fundamentally focused on the self-addicted mental habits that ultimately cause human suffering, the intention in the area of social engagement is to address this suffering as it manifests as broader social concerns.

Our hearts and minds can only fully awaken together with others. Centered in this truth, we hope to allow the dharma and our meditative practice to support us and the world as we address socially, politically, economically, and religiously-conditioned suffering and injustice. In doing so, we believe we not only honor the Buddha's request to attend to the suffering of the world, but this meeting of hearts also deepens our understanding of the dharma and our path.

Brooklyn Zen Center is committed to providing the following:

- A space for other religious, professional, and community groups to host independent meditation retreats, co-create programs with BZC, and facilitate dialogue.
- Programs that bring meditation and mindfulness training to those living and working in prisons, homeless shelters, hospices, hospitals, schools and other difficult institutional environments.
- Education and support groups for those working in helping and education professions whose work is informed by the dharma, meditation and mindfulness techniques.

We look forward to meeting the world in this multifaceted way so that our Zen Buddhist practice can continue to manifest the living dharma in this ever-changing world. We believe that the three

treasures – Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – are most honored when we share them openly and allow for an appropriate response to the world moment as it is.

We meet this current moment with renewed vigor in the very middle of maintaining our continuous, mindful respect for our lineage brought to us by Eihei Dogen and Shunryu Suzuki so that, in the former's words, "the Buddha's house brings forth the gold of the earth and makes fragrant the cream of the long river." In recognition that the world has only ever been this moment, together we carry this living tradition mindfully and compassionately forward.