

# The Distant Shore

• Newsletter of Isthmus Zen Community • Vol.13 No.1 • Winter 2010 •

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## **7-Day & Weekend Yong Maeng Jong Jin Zen Meditation Retreat with Thom Pastor, JDPSN**

- Guiding Teacher -  
Isthmus Zen Community

**March 14 - 21, 2010  
Bethel Horizons  
Barn Retreat Center  
Dodgeville, Wisconsin**

**Sit for a day... a weekend... or all week...** Experience the clarity, peace, and joy that flow out of an extended practice period! Mark your calendar now and plan to join members and friends of the Isthmus Zen Community for our annual week-long meditation retreat!

The retreat begins 5:00 pm Sunday evening, March 14, and concludes 2:30 pm Sunday afternoon, March 21.

Our program will include sitting, walking, chanting, and bowing meditation, kong-an (Jap.: koan) interviews with our guiding teacher, chi gong exercises, vegetarian meals, breaks, and short work periods.

**Need more information? Please call Dave at 608-221-3379.**

**To register, complete & mail the enclosed registration form, or call 608-221-3379.**

**Thom Pastor JDPSN** is founder (1994) and abbot of Las Vegas Zen Center. He began formal study in the Kwan Um School of Zen in the late 1980s with Zen Master Ji Bong and was given inka on April 6, 2002. Thom also teaches an Introduction to Zen Buddhism course at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

## **Annual Sangha Meeting**

**6:30 p.m. Wednesday  
February 10, 2010  
408 South Baldwin Street  
Madison, Wisconsin**

**All members and friends of the Isthmus Zen Community** are cordially invited to attend our annual sangha meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 2010 at 6:30 p.m. at 408 S. Baldwin St., Madison, Wisconsin.

Isthmus Zen Community officers and directors are required to attend, as stated in the organization By-Laws.

The meeting will open with a brief period of meditation practice. The agenda will include a discussion of our 2010 program schedule and community outreach, and election of officers for 2010. Refreshments will be provided. Help make the Isthmus Zen Community the sangha you want it to be!

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## **Zen Master Wu Kwang to visit Isthmus Zen Community May 21-23, 2010**

Zen Master Wu Kwang (Richard Shrobe) is the guiding teacher of the Chogye International Zen Center in New York City. For more than 30 years he has been teaching in the Kwan Um School of Zen. He is a musician, a social worker, and a certified Gestalt psychotherapist. He is also the author of *Open Mouth Already A Mistake* and *Don't-Know Mind: The Spirit of Korean Zen*.

Zen Master Wu Kwang will make his first visit to the IZC and lead a weekend retreat May 21-23. As a preview to that event, please turn to page 2 for a dharma talk by Wu Kwang Soen Sa Nim.

## DHARMA TALK

### Every Day and Every Moment by Zen Master Wu Kwang

*"Flowers in Springtime, Moon in Autumn, Cool Wind in Summer, Snow in Winter. If you don't make anything in your mind, for you it is a good season."*

I often use this poem to teach both new and more experienced Zen students. Quite often, when I ask a student during a private Zen interview to read the poem, I see a spontaneous smile or "Aha" reaction emerge, and a kindling of the student's "faith mind" or original confidence. It's as if he or she were saying, "Yeah, the True Way is like that."

The central point of this poem is essentially a restatement of the third and fourth of the Four Noble Truths, i.e., that there is an end to suffering and that there is a way or path of practice which actualizes the end of suffering. "If you don't make anything in your mind, for you it is a good season."

The poem comes from Case Nineteen of the *Mu Mun Kwan* and is titled "Everyday Mind is the Path." The case is an interchange or dialogue between Zen Master Nam Cheon and his student JoJu, who later became a great Zen Master in his own right. At the time of this Dharma combat JoJu is still an inexperienced student. He asks Master Nam Cheon, "What is the true way?" Nam Cheon responds that "Everyday mind is the true way."

Then, there follows a series of questions by JoJu and answers by Nam Cheon which, one by one, undo JoJu's conceptual orientation. For example, JoJu asks, "Then should I try to keep it or not?" Nam Cheon responds, "If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken." Finally, Nam Cheon exclaims, "If you completely attain the true way of not thinking, it is like space, clear and void. So why do you make right and wrong?" At this, JoJu got enlightenment.

In the case, there is only talk of the Mind of no thinking, clear and void like space. The poem emphasizes how one with such a mind functions in contact with time, part of the phenomenal world, which is indicated by the four seasons. In a few words, it demonstrates a non-clinging way of being/becoming, a way of encountering the

events of life. In this sense, it is in accord with Zen Master Seung Sahn's teaching of "Don't make anything, don't hold anything, don't attach to anything. Then you will realize that you have everything."

And a similar point is made in Zen Master Yun Men's case in the *Blue Cliff Record*, "Every Day is a Good Day" (Case Number Six):

Yun Men, instructing, said, "Don't ask me before the fifteenth day of the month (Borom). After Borom, you must bring me one word." He answered himself, "Every day is a good day."

Our teaching in the Kwan Um School of Zen proceeds from "every day is a good day" to "every moment is a good moment." So a number of important questions for practice appear from the four seasons poem and Yun Men's case.

1. How can you demonstrate the meaning of, "if you don't make anything in your mind, for you it's a good season?"
2. What is the true meaning of "Every day is a good day?"
3. How can you demonstrate your understanding of "every moment is a good moment?"

And finally: A good season, a good day, and a good moment, how are all of these different?

Which one is the best?

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*"But in truth, saving all sentient beings merely consists of attaining, in one moment, the realization that the substance of each thought is essentially empty. That is all."*

-- Zen Master So Sahn  
*The Mirror of Zen*

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## Coming Events 2010

**Wednesday, February 10, 6:30 p.m.**  
**Annual Sangha Meeting**  
**408 S. Baldwin St.**

Make the Isthmus Zen Community the dharma group you want it to be! Help set *your* sangha's direction in 2010. We'll have some meditation practice as usual, then discuss this year's program & have light refreshments. Everyone is welcome!

**March 14 -21, 2010**  
**Seven-Day Zen Meditation Retreat**  
**Guiding Teacher Thom Pastor, JDPSN**  
**Bethel Horizons Barn Retreat Center**  
**Dodgeville, Wisconsin**

This is the Isthmus Zen Community's 7th annual Seven-Day Yong Maeng Jong Jin retreat. Come and sit with us for a day, a weekend, or all week...find out for yourself what keeps bringing people back, year after year!

**April 23 -25, 2010**  
**Midwest Sangha Weekend**  
**Theosophical Society, Wheaton, Illinois**

Join guiding teachers, members & friends of the Chicago, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Madison and Kansas Kwan Um Zen centers for a weekend of seminars, Zen practice, socializing, and fun. This event doesn't happen every year! Meet your extended dharma family and become a part of the larger sangha!

**May 21 -23, 2010**  
**Weekend Zen Meditation Retreat**  
**featuring Zen Master Wu Kwang**  
**Guiding Teacher, Chogye International**  
**Zen Center, New York City**

Help us welcome visiting Zen Master Wu Kwang to the Midwest for his first visit to the Isthmus Zen Community. This opportunity may not come again! Join us for a weekend of practice with this clear and compassionate teacher.

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*"The Way has nothing to do with knowing or not knowing. Just get rid of the mind that clings to delusion and wants enlightenment."*

— Chinul

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Art and poetry submissions are welcome.

Isthmus Zen Community meets:  
Wednesday and Sunday evenings, 6:30-8:00 p.m.  
408 South Baldwin Street (side entrance)  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
Telephone (608) 221-3379  
E-mail: [info@isthmuszencommunity.org](mailto:info@isthmuszencommunity.org)

Introduction to Zen: Third Wednesday each month.  
Consulting interviews: Second & fourth Wednesdays each month.

Isthmus Zen Community website:  
[www.isthmuszencommunity.org](http://www.isthmuszencommunity.org)  
Kwan Um School of Zen website:  
[www.kwanumzen.com](http://www.kwanumzen.com)

Isthmus Zen Community  
Founder: Zen Master Seung Sahn  
Guiding Teacher: Thom Pastor, JDPSN  
Abbot: Dave Peters, BT  
Director: Edward Augustine, DT  
Secretary: Emmy Woessner  
Treasurer: Dave Peters

### Pledge Form

**Complete & return this form to:**  
**Isthmus Zen Community, c/o Dave Peters /**  
**402 W. Lakeview Ave / Madison, WI 53716.**  
**Please make checks payable to Isthmus Zen Community.**

Yes! I will make a monthly / quarterly / annual pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to sustain the efforts of the Isthmus Zen Community.

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

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Isthmus Zen Community  
c/o Dave Peters  
402 West Lakeview Avenue  
Madison, WI 53716

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**Inside:**

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with Guiding Teacher Thom Pastor, JDPSN  
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**and much more...**