

Christian Zen

How can you be Christian and practice Zen meditation? This question has been explored in our time by prominent Christians such as Thomas Merton and Anthony de Mello.

Christians are discovering that Zen meditation practices invigorate and deepen their prayer life and spiritual growth. Zen training is especially helpful to those seeking to integrate prayer with ministry or social action. The tensions which seem to exist between religious ideals and life “as it is” are dissolved by the practice of awareness both in sitting meditation and in daily life. Meister Eckhart described this process in two simple ways: “Just do the next thing” and “Let God be God in me.”

A Zen perspective on religious practice is to see what is already so and to remove the barrier between ourselves and the fundamental nature of all things. Zen awareness practices provide concrete methods to work through the “barriers.”

ZCOC welcomes Christians who wish to practice Zen. In our community, we have active Roman Catholics, Jews, atheists, Buddhists and people from all backgrounds and traditions. Yamada Roshi pointed out that we all drink the same cup of tea, whether we call ourselves Christian or Buddhist. But from a Zen perspective, one notes that we seldom do actually drink our tea...we are lost in thought, doing several things at the same time, waiting for something more important or interesting to do! Our practice helps us to be “in the moment” and to experience fully, apart from words to describe its meaning.

Specific questions or concerns about the relationship of Zen practice to Christianity may be discussed individually or during group discussions. We encourage Christians to register for the Introduction to Zen Workshop or Zen Mindfulness Month program.

One of the teachers at the Zen Center, Sr. Virgie Luchsinger, is a member of the Sisters For Christian Community. She is an Associate Member of the Presentation Sisters of Dubuque, Iowa. She was a Carmelite nun for 20 years. She has an M.A. in Theology. She is at the Zen Center periodically. Another of the teachers, Deborah Barrett, has extensive training in Christian meditation, including an M.A. in Theology from Loyola University, Chicago.

Christian Zen Recommended Reading List	
Title	Author
The Ground We Share: Everyday Practice, Buddhist and Christian	Robert Aitken and David Steindl-Rast
Total Liberation: Zen Spirituality and the Social Dimension	Ruben L. Habito
Lord Teach us to Pray: Christian Zen and the Inner Eye of Love	William Johnston
The Mirror Mind: Zen-Christian Dialogue	William Johnston
A Taste of Water: Christianity Through Taoist-Buddhist Eyes	Chwen Juan Lee and Thomas G. Hand
The Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha	Raimundo Panikkar
Zen Spirit, Christian Spirit	Robert E. Kennedy
Living Buddha, Living Christ	Thich Nhat Hanh
Silence	Shusaku Endo
Awareness – The Perils and Opportunities of Reality	Anthony deMello
Thoughts on the East	Thomas Merton