

DAOREN CIRCLE
DHARMA RAIN ZEN CENTER

Daoren Circle started in 2007 (thirteen years ago). It grew out of a committee that was formed to make recommendations for a group for lay practice. The lay teachers at that time (Jiko, Bukkai, and Fumyo) were advisors for the first few years. Bukkai actually joined the Daoren Circle in addition to being an advisor. (Her role of guiding teacher evolved over time and in 2019 she retired from that position.) The guiding teacher now is Kengan, who was in the group from the beginning.

The purpose of this group is to strengthen and deepen one's practice by taking on a set of common vows and to meet monthly for check-in and exploration of our practice. Daoren also has a service component. Individuals in the group are organized around the Library that resides in Uji-east. There are three gatherings at the home of a member which allows for more in-depth input and a supportive activity. It is very useful to see a person in their personal environment. Monthly mondo practice is done online and has helped new comers to approach mondo exercises with less intimidation, and embrace a new-found appreciation.

The common vows are:

- To recite the Bodhisattva Vows daily
- To begin each meal with the Five Thoughts
- To sit zazen five times a week
- To begin/end each day with simple ritual
- To give a least four hours of service each month to the Zen center
- To complete at least three days in a communal schedule
- To hold monthly communication focusing on accountability
- To hold monthly mondo exercises on line
- To continue ongoing spiritual relationship with a Dharma Rain Teacher
- May make vows emphasizing personal or practical matter:
 - Body/creative activities/work in community/family relationships/
 - Zendo roles/Dharma study/personal koans and questions of karma

By gathering monthly there is the added component of being accountable for one's commitment and intentions around practice. This does not necessarily mean that every vow is fulfilled, but that the vows provide guidelines from which to reflect on your efforts.