



Great Plains Zen Center



Sangha Newsletter

November 2015 through January 2016

Zazenkai - November 6-8

Our next retreat will be a zazenkai held November 6-8 at Myoshinji. The retreat begins on Friday evening and runs through Sunday morning. Please come and sit with us and enjoy the beautiful fall weather. *The cost of this retreat is \$75 and includes overnight lodging Friday and Saturday nights as well as all meals.*

Rohatsu Five-Day Sesshin – December 1-6

Rohatsu will begin Tuesday night, December 1 and end on Sunday morning, December 6 with a special Bodhi Day Service at 7:30 AM during our usual morning service in honor of the Enlightenment of the Buddha. This longer sesshin provides an opportunity for intense and deep practice and all those who feel ready for it are encouraged to attend. In the traditional Mahayana Buddhist calendar, Bodhi Day is December 8th, called Rohatsu in Japanese (literally, the 8th day of the 12th month). Mahayana Buddhists also recognize April 8 as the anniversary of Buddha's birth (Hanamatsuri) and February 15th as Nirvana Day, commemorating the passing of the Buddha from this sphere of teaching. *The cost of this retreat is \$250 for members, \$300 for non-members and includes overnight lodging as well as all meals. Part time participation is acceptable for those who cannot attend the entire sesshin.*

Gate of Sweet Nectar – December 13 at CCUU

Following the guidelines of the Zen Peacemakers, we would like to start doing the Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony on a quarterly basis. In order to allow more people to participate, we will hold the ceremony at **Countryside Church in Palatine on Sunday, 12/13 at 7:30 PM** (following one period of sitting at 7:00). This will be a shorter version than the annual version, without the full reading of the Book of the Dead or the outdoor procession. More about the ceremony can be found at: http://www.greatplainszen.org/zen_peacemakers

Retreat Dates for 2016:

- Jan. 8-10 Zazenkai
- Feb. 11-14 Nirvana Day Sesshin (3-Day)
- March 18-20 Beginner's Mind Sesshin (2-Day)
- April 7-10 3-Day Sesshin
- April 29-May 1 Work Weekend (no charge)
- June 9-12 Three Day Sesshin
- June 30- July 3 Three Day Sesshin
- July 31- Aug. 7 Peaceful Way 7-Day Sesshin
- Sept. 16-18 Beginner's Mind Sesshin (2-Day)
- October 13-16 Bodhidharma Sesshin (3-Day)
- Nov. 11-13 Zazenkai
- Dec. 8-11 Rohatsu sesshin (3-Day)

(All retreats are held at Myoshinji in Monroe, Wisconsin)

New Year's Zazen

Although it proves challenging to get the Sangha together for zazen on New Year's Eve, we encourage everyone to experience the traditional practice of sitting through the New Year wherever you are. Whether you sit for one half hour from 11:35 to 12:05 or just for a few minutes at midnight, by doing zazen as the New Year begins, you are creating a wonderful beginning for another year of practice. You will also know that many others in our, and other Sanghas around the world are sitting with you at that moment.

January Zazenkai – January 8-10

Our first retreat of the new year is the weekend zazenkai. It runs Friday evening, 1/8, through Sunday morning, 1/10. We will honor Dr. Martin Luther King by including daily practice of metta (loving kindness meditation) in the schedule. Winter sesshin offers a special opportunity for quiet, calm practice. *The cost of this retreat is \$75 for members and non-members alike and includes overnight lodging Friday and Saturday nights as well as all meals.*

Ripples Program makes its way into Wisconsin Public Schools

This fall, we have begun teaching Ripples (the children's meditation classes based on the Eightfold Path) in some Wisconsin public schools. It is being offered at New Glarus Elementary School for grades 1-4, with some fifth grade students from the Middle School also attending as an after school program. The students are practicing meditation, working on a kindness chain similar to the one displayed at Myoshinji, doing some art practice that helps develop mindfulness in action and more. We are grateful for the 2 high school helpers, some parents and some GPZC members and friends helping with the class. We have a lively group of 20 students, with more signed up for the spring semester.

Ripples is also being introduced at Beloit Learning Academy in Beloit, WI for students in 10-12th grades. There are currently two classes participating. Professor Bill New from Beloit College is helping with the classes, as are 7 Beloit College students. The Ripples program is offered in partnership with the Stateline Boys and Girls Club based in Beloit. The Beloit School system has embraced Restorative Practices for this school year (with circles similar to the Council Circles we participate in at GPZC), so the students are already familiar with circles and are now exploring meditation and mindfulness.



GPZC participates in local Crop Hunger Walk

On October 18, a group of GPZC members participated in a Crop Hunger Walk to raise funds to fight hunger locally and globally. The event, initiated by St. John's United Church of Christ, was organized and carried out by a number of local churches in Monroe, including Great Plains Zen Center. The walkers, almost 100 in number, raised over \$4,000, with Zen Center members raising over \$700 of that total. Roshi, along with area ministers, participated in a brief prayer ceremony and the GPZC group sang "Calling out to Hungry Hearts" (the song at the beginning of the Gate of Sweet Nectar ceremony). Walkers began their 2.5 or 1 mile walks to the sound of bagpipes. The event also included a contest in which youth groups made sculptures out of non-perishable food items. The Stateline Homeschoolers (who participated in the first Ripples class), took second place for their sculpture entitled "The Bison." (See photo, below). Many thanks to the walkers and to everyone who donated to this good cause. Visit our website and take a quiz to see how much you know about hunger-related issues:

<http://www.greatplainszen.org/files/crop-walk-quiz.pdf>



Prairie Restoration Update

During the last few sesshin, we have been collecting prairie seed from the Wellington's prairie as well as from prairie plants growing in our garden. This seed will be planted in November on the south side of the driveway, which is being cleared of invasive grasses by the process of solarization. Restoring a prairie takes many years of work, but we are happy to be underway, thanks to a burn conducted by the Prairie Enthusiasts last spring. We hope to start on the north side next spring. We are grateful to the Wellingtons for allowing us to collect seed in their beautiful prairie and for the clearing of brush in the meadow and also in the woods. We hope to have a walking path through the woods again soon.

Ancestor Memorial Shrine at Myoshinji

We are in the process of constructing a memorial shrine for our ancestors and mentors in practice. It will be located in the alcove to the right of the doorway to the women's dorm. There will be shelves where you can place a small photo of your ancestor and a battery-operated candle. These can be ancestors—parents, grandparents and others—who gave us birth in this existence. It can also be mentors or guides, as in the example of Joan George (see following article), who helped us find our life path. Our "lineage" consists not only of the succession of teachers extending back to Shakyamuni Buddha. It consists also of people, animals, even plants and things (all our relations) who have helped shape and guide our spiritual life-- past, present and future. It is important to spend time reflecting on and appreciating those who guide and support us in so many ways. **We will send out an announcement with more specific guidelines when the shrine is ready for photos.**

From Myoyu Roshi on her beloved friend in the Dharma...

With Gratitude to Joan Jo-An George

On the Anniversary of her passing from this life.

Joan George (August 31, 1940 - November 11, 2014) was the person who introduced me to Zen practice back in 1973. Originally from Kentucky, Joan was a wonderful clarinetist who played with the Milwaukee Symphony, taught clarinet and co-directed the Milwaukee Contemporary Chamber Players. After moving to San Diego in 1969 she continued to teach and to perform with her husband, percussionist Ronald George, and others. I met her when I was a student composer at UC San Diego, looking for a clarinet to play in a piece of music I had written. Joan encouraged me to attend sitting at the home of Dr. Ray Jordan, a Zen monk and professor at San Diego State University. She then began talking about the Zen Center of Los Angeles and the teacher there, Taizan Maezumi Roshi. Without having any particular reason, I agreed to go to ZCLA with her one Saturday morning and check it out. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Joan contributed much to the early development of practice at Zen Center of Los Angeles. She created important programs for members and was the person who first put together the “Doan Book” with instructions for when to hit the bells organized on the page much like a musician's score. A version of that book is still used today at GPZC and many other White Plum Zen Centers. I have countless memories of Joan coaching me patiently on oryoki, discussing the inevitability of leg pain during zazen, teaching zendo positions with meticulous precision – and caring for her beloved cats, Molly and Goblin. I am awed and humbled by the significant contribution Joan made to my life by introducing me not only to Zen practice, but also to the person who became my teacher.



Introduction to Zen Practice Workshops

Great Plains Zen Center continues to offer monthly Introductory Workshops at Countryside Unitarian Church, 1025 N Smith Road, Palatine, Illinois and at Myoshinji in Monroe, Wisconsin. Each workshop provides basic, practical information, including how to do *zazen* (Zen meditation), how to practice at home and throughout the day, the aims of practice, and what opportunities for additional or more advanced practice are offered at GPZC.

- Workshops in **Palatine** (Illinois) will be held Saturdays, November 21, December 12 and January 16, and run from 8:30-11:30 AM, followed by an informal lunch.
- Workshops at **Myoshinji** (Wisconsin) will be held Saturdays, November 14, December 19 and January 16. Workshops run from 8:30-11:30 AM.

The cost for each workshop is \$25 per person (\$15 for students and seniors; free for repeating participants).

Visit <http://greatplainszen.org/workshops> to register, or call us at (847) 274-4793 or (608) 325-6248. Please note that workshops are held in two different locations (Palatine, Illinois and Monroe, Wisconsin). *Be sure to note the location carefully when registering.*

Weekly Schedule at Myoshinji

Early morning sitting takes place at Myoshinji at 5:30 AM on Fridays with a morning service following. Evening zazen takes place Fridays at 7 PM. The Saturday schedule includes Zazen at 9 AM followed by talk or discussion as well as an optional morning service at 8:30 AM for those who wish to learn traditional Soto Zen Buddhist liturgy. This provides an opportunity to learn the service positions we do during sesshin and practice them on a regular basis.

Weekly Schedule in Palatine at CCUU

Zazen (Zen meditation) is held every Sunday at 7:00 PM at Countryside Church - Unitarian Universalist, 1025 N. Smith Road, in Palatine, Illinois. We welcome new friends to join us any Sunday. A standard schedule includes a 30-minute period of zazen, 10 minutes of kinhin (walking meditation) and a second 30-minute period of zazen.

Each month, the Zen Center holds *Fusatsu*, the *Renewal of the Vows* ceremony (in place of the second zazen period). Everyone is welcome whether or not they have formally received the Buddhist Vows. One Sunday sitting each month features a *teisho* (a formal dharma talk) by our teacher, Susan Myoyu Andersen, Roshi, followed by group discussion.

Also, once a month, members and friends are invited to gather before sitting at **6:15 pm** for informal *Tea and Chat* alternating with *Council* (a more formal format for discussion and sharing). These events offer an opportunity for newcomers and “regulars” alike to get to know—and share with—one another. *Please see the calendar for specific dates for these activities.*

Holiday Closures at Myoshinji & CCUU

Please note these holiday dates when **Myoshinji will be closed**, with no activities: **November 27-28 & December 25-26**. Also, there will be **no sitting at CCUU** on Sunday evening, **Dec. 27**.

Registration for GPZC Events

To register for GPZC events, please *register/pay online at www.greatplainszen.org*. Please register for any sesshin, zazenkaï or workshop at *least one week prior* to the start. This allows us to assign positions and arrange other logistics for the event. If you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact us to make arrangements and check on availability of space. Late cancellations are subject to a \$35 non-refundable fee.



Membership in the Great Plains Zen Center

There are four levels of membership in the Sangha of the Great Plains Zen Center: **Practicing Membership** (\$50 per month) is for anyone who will be practicing zazen with the sangha on a regular, weekly basis. Practicing Members receive a discounted rate for sesshin (retreats). **Affiliate Membership** (\$30 per month) is for sangha members who live at a greater distance from the regular sittings, and who are not able to attend on a regular basis. **Friend of GPZC** (any amount per year) is for anyone who wishes to support the Zen Center and be included in all special communications. **Sustaining Membership** is for anyone committing to any amount, \$75 and above, per month.

Any of these levels of dues can be submitted at our website:
<http://greatplainszen.org/membership/dues>

Membership helps deepen one's commitment to practice, helps support the center and helps make the practice available to more people now and in the future. Please join us.

Contact Us

By phone: (847) 274-4793

Myoshinji (Monroe, Wisconsin): (608) 325-6248

By e-mail: gpzc@greatplainszen.org

Note our current mailing address:

PO Box 2077

Palatine, IL 60078-2077

Find out more about the Great Plains Zen Center on the web at: greatplainszen.org

Check out our website: <http://www.greatplainszen.org>

If you haven't opened the GPZC website recently, please visit! You'll find pages covering the following topics: Starting Zen Practice, Community, Workshops, Retreats, Zen Peacemaker Order and a page for children—and much more. You can also learn about our teacher, Myoyu Roshi, and our home, *Myoshinji*, in Monroe, Wisconsin. The site also carries information about all of our upcoming activities, as well as links for registering for events.

GPZC

P.O. Box 2077

Palatine, IL 60078-2077



Great Plains Zen Center – Myoshinji (Subtle Mind Temple) – Monroe, Wisconsin

W77962 Falk Rd • Monroe, WI • 608-325-6248

November 2015

1	2	3	4	5	6 Zazenkai	7 Zazenkai
8 Zazenkai	9	10	11	12	13 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	14 8:30 am Beloit Coll. Intro Workshop
15	16	17	18	19	20 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	21 8:30am Service 9am Zazen
22	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving	27 (closed)	28 (closed)
29	30					

December 2015

		1 Sesshin	2 Sesshin	3 Sesshin	4 Sesshin	5 Sesshin 9am Zazen
6 Sesshin	7	8 Bodhi Day	9	10	11 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	12 8:30am Service 9am Zazen
13	14	15	16	17	18 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen	19 8:30 am Intro Workshop
20 Sesshin	21	22	23	24	25 (closed) Christmas Day	26 (closed)
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2016

					1 (closed) New Year's Day	2 (closed)
3	4	5	6	7	8 Zazenkai	9 Zazenkai 9am Zazen
10 Zazenkai	11	12	13	14	15 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen	16 8:30 am Intro Workshop
17	18	19	20	21	22 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen	23 8:30am Service 9am Zazen
24 / / 31	25	26	27	28	29 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	30 8:30am Service 9am Zazen

Great Plains Zen Center – Countryside Unitarian Church – Palatine, Illinois

1025 N Smith Rd • Palatine, IL • 847-274-4793

November 2015

1 <i>7:00 pm Zazen & Fusatsu</i>	2	3	4	5	6 Zazenkai	7 Zazenkai
8 Zazenkai <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 <i>6:15p Tea 7:00p Zazen & Teisho</i>	16	17	18	19	20	21 <i>8:30 am Intro Workshop</i>
22 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving	27	28
29 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	30					

December 2015

<i>* 12/13: Council @ 6:15</i>		1 Sesshin	2 Sesshin	3 Sesshin	4 Sesshin	5 Sesshin
6 Sesshin <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	7	8 Bodhi Day	9	10	11	12 <i>8:30 am Intro Workshop</i>
13 <i>* 7:00 pm Zazen & Gate of Sweet Nectar</i>	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	21	22	23	24	25 Christmas Day	26
27 <i>(closed)</i>	28	29	30	31	1 (Jan.) New Year's Day	2 (Jan.)

January 2016

3 <i>7:00 pm Zazen & Fusatsu</i>	4	5	6	7	8 Zazenkai	9 Zazenkai
10 Zazenkai <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	11	12	13	14	15	16 <i>8:30 am Intro Workshop</i>
17 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 <i>6:15p Tea 7:00p Zazen & Teisho</i>	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>						