



Great Plains Zen Center



Sangha Newsletter

November 2016 through January 2017

Zazenkai - November 11-13

Our next retreat will be a zazenkai held November 11-13 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 6-11

Rohatsu will begin Tuesday night, December 6 and end on Sunday morning, December 11 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). *The cost of this retreat is \$200 for members, \$240 for non-members for full-time, and includes overnight lodging as well as all meals. Part time participation is acceptable for those who cannot attend the entire sesshin.*

December 11 – Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony followed by Write For Rights Event

In honor of International Human Rights Day, we will have a Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony followed by letter writing for the Amnesty International Write for Rights program. The **Gate of Sweet Nectar** will take place at 9 AM. The ceremony is based on a sutra called the Kan Ro Mon, commonly chanted in Japanese monasteries today. The Kan Ro Mon is said to have originated as a prayer given to Buddha's disciple, Moggallana to help his mother who was suffering in the Hell of Hungry Demons. Whenever she attempted to eat, the food burst into flames, causing even more suffering. By the offering of this prayer, her suffering was relieved. Roshi Bernie Glassman, founder of the Zen Peacemaker Order, translated the Kan Ro Mon along with his teacher, Maezumi Roshi and added elements from other traditions to create the Gate of Sweet Nectar. The Gate of Sweet Nectar is about bringing nourishment to those, like Moggallana's mother, who are forgotten, marginalized or uncared for. When we invoke this ceremony, we vow to become aware of and nourish all parts of ourselves and society.

The Amnesty International Write for Rights letter writing begins at about 10 AM. We will provide paper and pens or you may bring your own. Although handwritten letters are considered more effective, you may bring a computer and type, if you prefer. We will have information and sample letters for the 12 cases we are writing about. You may write letters about any or all of them.

For more information about Write for Rights, including case information, visit this link: <http://write.amnestyusa.org/>

An informal vegetarian lunch will be provided. There is no charge for this event. Please RSVP by emailing Myoyu Roshi at s.myoyu.andersen@gmail.com or register on our website using this link: greatplainszen.org/node/393

January Three-Day Sesshin – January 5-8

Our first retreat of the New Year is the weekend zazenkai. It runs Thursday evening, 1/5, through Sunday morning, 1/8. We will honor Dr. Martin Luther King by including daily practice of metta (loving kindness meditation) in the schedule. We will also hold a *Gate of Sweet Nectar* ceremony at 9:00AM following the sesshin. Winter sesshin offers a special opportunity for quiet, calm practice. *The cost of this retreat is \$150 for members and \$180 for non-members, and includes overnight lodging as well as all meals.*



Holiday Closings

Please be aware that Myoshinji be closed on following dates: November 18 & 19; November 25 & 26; December 23 & 24. The schedule for December 30 & 31 is to be determined. (Please call (608)-325-6248 for updated information.) Also, there will be no sitting in Palatine on December 25.

Great Plains Zen Center now on Facebook

Please visit and **like** our **Great Plains Zen Center Page**: <http://www.facebook.com/GreatPlainsZenCenter/>. There, we will post updates on events and schedules and other important information. You can also follow Myoyu Roshi on Twitter @MyoyuA, for social action posts.

Building Renovation Complete!

Last November the Great Plains Zen Center Board members met to discuss the decision to move forward with a long-term vision— to renovate the storage/work building on the grounds at Myoshinji, our property in Monroe, Wisconsin. As we have grown, the need for a larger zendo (meditation hall) has been evident for some time. A renovated building would provide that much needed space as well as a flexible facility for other Zen Center events and also potential rental events.



Board members committed over \$21,000 and with the help of many regular members and many other friends of the center, over \$21,000 more was raised. We also had income of over \$4,000 from special fund raising events, bringing our total to over \$46,000.

The renovation was planned to take place in two phases. Well beyond our initial expectations, we were able to complete *both* phases in under a year. **Phase 1** included: high quality insulation in the walls and ceiling; all new drywall on walls and ceiling; all new electrical wiring; energy-saving recessed, dimmable LED ceiling lighting and quality ceiling fans; 10 large well-insulated windows allowing beautiful natural light and two new steel doors; natural wood trim on doors and windows; grading of the earth around the building to improve drainage. **Phase 2** included: installation of a propane-fueled heating system; a new metal roof (to match the main building); new flooring and custom-made floor moldings. We'll be completing the transformation by adding gutters and interior furnishings such as window blinds and shoji screens.

Our October Honoring The Way of Zazen Sesshin was held in the new zendo, as was the jukai ceremony that followed. Everyone who attended felt the uplifting effect of our new meditation hall.

We are very grateful to all who have supported us in making this vision a reality. We hope that all contributors and all supporters of the Zen Center will come and see the new zendo in person.

Gendo Sensei Signs Copies of His New Book

Following our October sesshin, John Gendo Wolff, Sensei, teacher of the Great Wave Zen Sangha in Ludington, MI, held a book signing for his new book, *The Driftwood Shrine: Discovering Zen in American Poetry*. Gendo Sensei, who was a longtime practitioner at GPZC, became Myoyu Roshi's Dharma successor in June 2012.

*“Representing a new approach to the West's evolving understanding of Buddhism, **The Driftwood Shrine** is the first collection of Zen teachings to be based on the poems of great American writers. In reassuring, forthright, and often surprising language, Wolff explains how Emily Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, H.D., Richard Wright, and many other poets enshrined the gentle light of the Buddha's teaching in their work. Poetry lovers and Zen practitioners alike will find themselves moved toward a penetrating awareness of the realms of spiritual resolve, impermanence, desire, faith, and awakening.”* -Sumeru Press

The *Driftwood Shrine* is available through sumeru-books.com and amazon.com.

Jukai Ceremony for John Knewitz & Sherry Lira

On October 16, members John Knewitz and Sherry Lira formally received the Buddhist Precepts in the traditional jukai ceremony. In the jukai ceremony, a practitioner takes refuge in the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) –indeed, “reveals himself or herself to *be* the Three Treasures” and commits to upholding the Three Pure Precepts and the Ten Grave Precepts.



On the occasion of this ceremony, Myoyu Roshi gave dharma names to both students. John received the name *Genshin*, “Source of the Mind”, and Sherry was given the name *Shōzan*, “Blossoming Mountain.”

Unstained, the Entire World Cannot Stain Her

by GPZC Member Bonnie Myosen Nadzam

We have just begun reciting the *Hymn of the Perfection of Wisdom* in our liturgy at GPZC, a list of our Female Buddha Ancestors compiled by Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao, at Zen Center of Los Angeles. In this season, now, there are more reasons to recognize and continue the endless practice and tireless work of many extraordinary women, including ancestors and contemporaries, than I have space for here. Indeed, here is a remarkable fact that reflects the tremendous female energy in the White Plum Sangha, alone: I have only ever had dokusan with female roshis—four of them: Iliá Shinko Perez, Merle Kodo Boyd, Wendy Egyoku Nakao, and Susan Myoyu Andersen. Please appreciate how amazing this is! A female roshi has overcome even more odds than the grueling, never-ending practice requires of men.



Myoyu Roshi

A roshi is an extraordinary treasure. It is sometimes unbelievable to me that there is one right here in southern Wisconsin. What are the chances? What an opportunity! Some of us, though, may fall into an all-too-familiar trap of thinking a zen teacher is supposed to look a certain way: male, for one thing. Perhaps stern, commanding, and silent. Perhaps we have a certain age in mind, a certain ethnic background. Given some of the work our broader culture has to do in terms of gender equality, it might be sometimes hard to consider it a reflection of deep wisdom, flexibility, resilience and genuine care that our teacher is soft-spoken, moved to tears by the profundity of our liturgy, and wears a Buddha face in dokusan that often easily breaks into smile and huge laughter. These are not the characteristics of someone who merely wants to be “liked” but, indeed, of someone whose years and years of practice—we’ll never be able to calculate how many years—have rendered her wisdom into so merciful a sword, I am sometimes scarcely aware she is carrying one at all, until days after a teisho I realize she has thoroughly sliced the head off one of my delusions. As a young man in our sangha whispered to me recently: “Myoyu may have a soft way about her, but there is absolutely no mistaking who is in charge here.” Of course our reverence for her is at once personal (just think of the scores of sesshin, of the hundreds of thousands of times she has returned her attention to This Great Matter!), and utterly impersonal (who is it, really, that is greeting us in dokusan?).

One of the things that changes quite naturally as a zazen practice deepens is one’s relationship to our ancestors and teachers. In addition to the liturgy, there are other rituals in place to help us awaken, when we are lucky enough to be in the presence of one such person: we do not stand at the end of a sitting period until our teacher is standing. Before our teacher leaves the zendo, someone must always bow and step out first, to set her shoes side by side at the doorway for her to slip her feet into. None of this is because we are worshipful of Susan Andersen, or because we have made some character judgment about our teacher and her “personality,” but indeed, because we must ask ourselves, again and again, whenever we address Myoyu Roshi: Who Is This? Who Is This?

Green County Citizens Address Environmental Concern

by GPZC Member John Seishin Hagen

I have been doing volunteer work for a non-profit organization named **Green County Defending our Farmland** (greencdf.org). The purpose of GCDF is to foster a regulatory environment that is not supportive of an agricultural system designated by the USDA as “concentrated animal feed operations” and commonly referred to as “CAFO”. Indeed, CAFO is an appropriate description of these types of operations, for each one contains a multitude of animals that are literally packed into these facilities like sardines in a can, and live out their lives in appalling conditions. In general, these facilities are the origins of a plurality of environmental and social problems. Moreover, the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions require the continuous use of antibiotics. The medical and public health communities have been expressing concern about these practices because they have, and continue to create threats to public health.

Let’s consider how the industry responds to efforts by informed citizens to mitigate or prevent the undesirable effects of their activities. Typically the CAFO industry responds to resistance by citizen groups by bombarding governmental authorities and media outlets with public relations (PR). The content of the PR is designed to create a facade of beneficence and produce favorable responses from the authorities.

Fortunately, some members of the county board are cognizant of CAFO characteristics and are also active in GCDF. They alerted the wider membership of the corporate PR campaign and sought a person who would be willing to work on debunking corporate claims. I responded to this request and wrote a five-part series of short essays, which provide a good overview of the nature of the CAFO system of food production, and I am making them available to GPZC members.

Editor’s note: Please contact Seishin directly at seishinn3@gmail.com to request copies of his essays. For further information on Green County Defending our Farmland, visit their website, <https://greencdf.org/>.

Weekly Schedule at Myoshinji – Note Changes!

Each week, sitting takes place Friday at 5:30 AM (followed by service) and Friday evening at 7 PM. On Saturdays, there is service at 8:30 AM followed by two periods of zazen starting at 9AM. During retreats, Saturday morning sitting is open to those not attending the retreat with zazen beginning at 9:15. Once per month, we have an **Introduction to Zen Practice Workshop** in place of the regular Saturday AM schedule. Check our website for dates. The **Gate of Sweet Nectar** ceremony will take place generally once per month at Myoshinji.

We will now have a **Renewal of the Vows** (*Fusatsu*) ceremony every other month at Myoshinji on a Friday evening following zazen. All are welcome whether or not you have taken the Buddhist precepts. Please check our Facebook page or website for other special events at Myoshinji.

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.

Every other month, the Zen Center holds *Fusatsu*, the *Renewal of the Vows* ceremony (in place of the second sitting). 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* (circle practice of deep listening 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*

Introduction to Zen Practice Workshops

Great Plains Zen Center will continue to hold 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 19, December 17 and January 21, and run from 8:30-11:30 AM, followed by an informal lunch.
- Workshops at **Myoshinji** (Wisconsin) will be held Saturdays, December 3 and January 21 (no workshop in November). 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 (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.*

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 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.

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.

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, Workshops, Retreats, Anti-Racism Resources, Practicing the Precepts, 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.

Contact Us

By phone: (608) 325-6248

By e-mail: gpzc@greatplainszen.org

Our postal mailing addresses:

W77962 Falk Rd • Monroe, WI 53566

PO Box 2077 • Palatine, IL 60078-2077

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

<http://www.facebook.com/GreatPlainsZenCenter/>

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

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

November 2016

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|-----------------------|----|----|----|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 5:30 a Zazen & service 7 pm Zazen | 5 8:30a Service 9:00a Zazen |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 Zazenkai | 12 Zazenkai |
| 13 Zazenkai | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 (closed) | 19 (closed) |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 Thanksgiving | 25 (closed) | 26 (closed) |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

December 2016

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|---|----|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| * December 11 events (see Page 1 articles): 9 AM = Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony; 10 AM = Write for Rights | | | | 1 | 2 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen & 7:40 Fusatsu | 3 8:30 am Intro Workshop |
| **For schedule on December 30 & 31, please call 608-325-6248 | | | | | | |
| 4 | 5 | 6 Sesshin | 7 Sesshin | 8 Bodhi Day Sesshin | 9 Sesshin | 10 Sesshin 9am Zazen |
| 11 Sesshin * 9:00 GSN * 10:00 WFR | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen & | 17 8:30a Service 9:00a Zazen |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 (closed) | 24 (closed) |
| 25 Christmas | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 Schedule TBD ** | 31 Schedule TBD ** |

January 2017

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|--------------------------------|----|----|--|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 New Year's Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Sesshin | 6 Sesshin | 7 Sesshin 9am Zazen |
| 8 Sesshin * 9:00 GSN | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen | 14 8:30a Service 9:00a Zazen |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen | 21 8:30 am Intro Workshop |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00 p Zazen | 28 8:30a Service 9am Zazen |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | * January 8 @ 9 AM = Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony | | | |

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

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

November 2016

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

December 2016

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

January 2017

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