



Great Plains Zen Center



Sangha Newsletter

August through October 2010

Three-Day Sesshin – August 12 – 15

GPZC's summer *ango* (traditional intensive training period) ends this year with our August three-day *sesshin*. This retreat begins on Thursday evening, August 12, and runs through Sunday morning, August 15, and is held at *Myoshinji*. *Following *sesshin*, there will be an optional field trip to the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, WI (about 90 minutes from *Myoshinji*). The preserve is home to all 15 species of crane in natural settings, surrounded by beautiful restored prairies, wetlands and savannahs for hiking.

Beginner's Mind Sesshin – September 17-19 NEW!

Those who are in the early stages of their practice are encouraged to join us for our first *Beginner's Mind Sesshin* in September. *Sesshin* (intensive practice retreats) are an important part of Zen practice (see *Zazenkaï & Sesshin* on page 2). This retreat will introduce students to the formal practices that are integral to *sesshin*, including: sitting and walking meditation; liturgy; taking meals in the traditional, formal *oryoki* style; and work practice. Roshi will help students understand the many components and aspects of retreat practice, offering opportunities to ask questions about Zen practice and to explore the important student-teacher relationship.

This *sesshin* will be conducted at *Myoshinji* in Monroe, Wisconsin. Registration for this—and all other retreats—may be done online at www.greatplainszen.org. *The cost of this retreat is \$75 and includes overnight lodging Friday & Saturday, as well as all meals.*

Easter Seals' "Walk With Me" - September 25

Consider joining this extraordinary event as a walker or by making a donation. By participating, you will be helping Easter Seals provide a multitude of services for people with disabilities. Roshi will be walking with the team "Little Miracles," which includes staff members of the Easter Seals Autism Therapeutic Day School where she is employed as an occupational therapist.

Registration for the event will begin at 7:30 AM on 9/25. The walk starts at 8:30 and goes until about noon. You will have the opportunity to meet the "ambassadors" and socialize afterwards. Walkers will meet at the YMCA Log Lodge and walk the Rockford Park District's 2-mile Rock River Rec Path. More information can be viewed on the website below.

To make a donation, go to <http://www.easterseals.com>, click on "Sponsor a Walker" and enter "Susan Andersen" as the walker name. To sign up as a walker, click on "Participate in a Walk," select "Illinois" and click on the event in Rockford on 9/25. Type in "Little Miracles" to join Roshi's team (the team leader is Lori Linley).

Three-Day Sesshin – October 8-11

Our October retreat, held at *Myoshiji* will begin on Friday evening (10/8) and run through Sunday Morning (10/11). Please refer to registration instructions on page 2 for this and all retreats.

Introductory Meditation Class – Sept. 28 - Nov. 2

A new six-week Introduction to the Practice of Meditation course begins this fall. The course takes place on Tuesday nights from 6:30 – 8 PM from 9/28 through 11/2/2010. The course is offered through the continuing education program at **Blackhawk Technical College** in Monroe, but classes are held at *Myoshinji*. The class will again provide detailed instruction in how to do *zazen*, *Metta Bhavana* (lovingkindness meditation) and how to establish practice at home. Students have the opportunity to reflect on how meditation is influencing their lives and fostering the development of compassion, equanimity, and peacefulness during discussions held throughout the course. Students are introduced to the scientific investigation of the benefits of meditation. For questions or to register, please contact Blackhawk Technical College at: 608-758-6900 or on line at <https://forms.blackhawk.edu/ncform/forms/register.htm>

The summer semester Intro to Meditation course finished on July 21, with 6 regular attendees. The students enjoyed the course very much and gave positive feedback on the setting, the contents, and the instruction. "Taking this course was a new experience and was very helpful to me. I have had problems the last year with stress and anxiety and the Zen Center was a haven," commented one student. Another remarked that, "The facilities were very peaceful and conducive to meditating." Another student encouraged us to "Keep it up and get the word out. More people would definitely be interested." Many said they would prefer a longer class (maybe 10 weeks) so that they could continue to benefit from the instruction and discussions. Several plan to continue attending the regular Tuesday night *zazen* and discussion now that the class has ended.

The Noble Eightfold Path: an Online Class

Online - September 4 through December 11, 2010.

This class explores the Eightfold Path, one of the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha and the fourth of the Four Noble Truths. The eightfold path describes the elements of ethical conduct (*Sila*): Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood; the elements of concentration (*Samadhi*): Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration; and the elements of wisdom (*Prajna*): Right Thought and Right Understanding. In this class, we look at these teachings from the Mahayana standpoint (including the Zen tradition) as well as the traditional formulations described in the Pali Canon.

(continued on page 3)

Zazenkai & Sesshin are Unique and rare Opportunities to Deepen our Practice-

A Message from Roshi.

I would like to encourage those who have been practicing to consider the importance and great benefit of attending *zazenkai* and *sesshin*, or intensive retreats. While practicing daily at home is very important, having the chance to set other concerns aside and dive deep into practice is a challenging, but truly remarkable, experience in our practice lives. While it is not easy for many of us to create this space in our lives with our multiple responsibilities, I would encourage us to try to do so.

During *zazenkai* and *sesshin*, we all live together at Myoshinji and follow the same schedule with multiple periods of *zazen* interspersed with walking meditation, as well as services, formal meals and work period throughout the day. Silence throughout the week or weekend allows us to focus on our practice intensely, without the usual distractions.

In the words of Keizan Zenji, "Listening and thinking are like being outside the gate; *zazen* is returning home and sitting in peace.

Registration for GPZC Events

Recent *sesshin* have been near-or at-capacity, so we recommend signing up as early as possible. Please register for any *sesshin*, *zazenkai* or workshop at least 1 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.

The cost for each *zazenkai* is \$75. The cost for each 3-day *sesshin* is \$150 for current Practicing Members; \$180 for others. Students may attend any *sesshin* on a part-time basis (\$50 per day for current Practicing Members; \$60 per day for others). To register, please *register/pay online* at www.greatplainszen.org



Gate of Sweet Nectar Procession

The July *Sesshin* included our Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony. Several members offered their reflections on this moving and important event. Find more on our web site, greatplainszen.org
The following were submitted by Gendo and Kaiun:

Reflections on the Kan Ro Mon: An Admission

Our last 7-Day *sesshin* was the third occasion on which I have participated in the *Gate of Sweet Nectar* ceremony. This ritual invites the Buddha families to be present at a feeding of the Hungry Ghosts and "evil spirits" in our lives. From the golden dusk-lit gate of the temple, where Roshi offered incense, our procession strolled, two-by-two, along a chain of lanterns, or *candelaria*, up the hill to the Jizo statue. We chanted out of breath as we climbed the rise, the inkin bell's glistening sound drifting over the meadow of Queen Anne's Lace and still, tall grasses.

In theory, the evil ones follow the same lighted path, seeking the relief of dharma nourishment in the *zendo*, where we conducted the main part of the ritual. Roshi, with her sleeves obscuring the secret hand gestures that beckon the suffering demons into our midst, was choked with emotion as she called out to them. As *doan*, I was concentrating on the bells. It doesn't take much to realize that a mis-timed strike is instantly redeemed by the Buddha's voice. Gradually, I relaxed a bit, listening to the others' chanting and the *Ino's* long and moving dedication and recitation of the names of the dead. It was then that I too was swept by emotion, as I visualized the numbers of dead from war and famine and natural disasters. I found myself recalling a koan (*Daizui's Kalpa Fire*) about the end of time, when fire rages through the universe, destroying everything.

For me, the *Gate of Sweet Nectar* is an opportunity to reach out to the hungry ghosts within us, to give them quarter, feed them, and relieve them. Unless we acknowledge their reality, born of our own greed, anger, and ignorance, we fail to complete our vows. It is in the spirit of the word of "admission", both as a "gate of admittance" and as an honest acknowledgment of our frailties that I participate in, and appreciate, this beautiful and moving ceremony. —Gendo

Impressions of the Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony

During rehearsal, Roshi provided an in-depth understanding of the foundation of the Gate of Sweet Nectar ceremony: Ananda's psychic connection with his mother, his suffering over her suffering after physical death, and his having gone to the Buddha asking if there was anything he could do. The Gate of Sweet Nectar was the Buddha's response. With that background, the ceremony itself was incredibly moving, and I have replayed it many times over in my head. It was solemn and celebratory. It was a passionate plea that goes to the root of Buddhism itself...to save ALL sentient beings from the standpoint that we are ALL the Buddha...not one of the "Buddhas", but THE Buddha. And our interconnectedness was made with such clarity in this ceremony that it deepened my practice and my urgency to awaken. It was the most moving and impressionable ceremony I have ever been involved with in any spiritual tradition. Thank you, Roshi, for your instruction, leadership, and heart in leading us through the Gate of Sweet Nectar. —Kaiun

Eightfold Path—Online Class (continued from p.1)

The class, which was also offered in spring, 2010, includes online readings, discussion, and assignments, allowing us to explore our own disharmonies, within and without, with the help of this ancient and comprehensive teaching and respectful sharing and feedback from others in the course.

Spring, 2010 participants described the course as “transformational,” and providing clarity and encouragement for ongoing practice. One participant, who was new to practice, commented that “My faith in the path I have chosen has increased many times by participating in the class. I really, really appreciate the opportunity.”

In order to give participants more time to read and reflect on the materials and participate in the discussions and assignments, a new topic—with lectures and readings—will be presented every two weeks. The class will begin on Saturday, September 4 and continue through Saturday, December 11, 2010.

Cost of the class is \$45 for 8 class sessions. Registration information will soon be available online at www.greatplainszen.org. Upon registration, you will receive information about logging onto the course website and navigating between sections. For further information, please call 608-325-6248.

An Open Invitation – Work Practice at Myoshinji

Particularly during this quarter, there is much work to be done to take care of the buildings and grounds at Myoshinji. Anyone who wishes, is welcome to come any Saturday for the two periods of *zazen* (starting at 9 AM) and informal discussion following and then stay for lunch and informal work projects. Some skilled projects include repairing some loose siding on the East side of the building, finishing window trim in the downstairs bedroom, replacing siding in front, painting the downstairs bathroom and changing the oil in the lawn mower. There are ongoing opportunities for weeding and planting in our various gardens, lawn care and much more. Please call ahead to 608-325-6248 when you plan to come, so that we are expecting you.

Upcoming Dates

At our June Board of Directors meeting, dates for future retreats were established. Please visit the web site, greatplainszen.org to confirm these as the dates approach. Circumstances sometimes lead to changes in selected dates.

- Nov. 12-14 Zazenkai
- Dec. 3-5 Rohatsu Zazenkai
- Jan. 14-17, 2011 3-Day Sesshin
- Feb. 18-20 Zazenkai
- Mar. 31- April 3 3-Day Sesshin
- May 13-15 Beginner’s Mind Sesshin

Weekly Schedule in Palatine at CCUU

Zazen (Zen meditation) is held every Sunday at 7:00 p.m. 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 they have formally taken the Buddhist Vows or not. Upcoming *Fusatsu* dates are August 29, September 26, and October 24.

One Sunday sitting each month will feature *teisho* (a formal dharma talk) by our teacher, Susan Myoyu Andersen, Roshi, followed by group discussion. Upcoming *teisho* are scheduled for August 8, September 5, and October 3.

Also, once a month, members and friends are invited to gather for informal **Talk & Tea** at 6:15. (8/15; 9/12; 10/17.)

Introduction to Zen Practice Workshops

Great Plains Zen Center will continue to hold monthly Introductory Workshops at Countryside Unitarian Church, 1025 N Smith Rd, 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. Attendance at an introductory workshop is required of anyone who would like to become a member of the Great Plains Zen Center.

Workshops in **Palatine** (Illinois) will be held Saturdays, August 21, September 11, and October 16. and run from 8:30-11:30 AM., followed by an informal lunch.

Workshops at **Myoshinji** (Wisconsin) will be held Saturdays, August 28, September 11, and October 23. 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 greatplainszen.org/workshops to register, or call us at 847-274-4793. Please be sure to note the *location* (Illinois or Wisconsin) of the various workshop dates!

Weekly Schedule at Myoshinji Updated

Myoshinji’s weekly schedule has been updated, and now includes these opportunities:
Morning *zazen*, 5:30–6:00 AM every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; Evening *zazen* each Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:00 PM (followed by discussion and ending about 8:30 PM on Tuesdays); Saturday morning *zazen* continues to be offered at 9:00 AM, followed by discussion, ending about 11:00 AM.

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 Member**, is for anyone committing to any amount, \$75 and above per month.

Any of these levels of dues can be submitted at our website at: <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

By e-mail: gpzc@greatplainszen.org

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

Visit Our Web Site

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

Other Services Offered by Great Plains Zen Center

Myoyu Roshi is an ordained Buddhist priest and can perform weddings, baby blessings, memorials and funerals, and home visits for those members who are seriously ill. She is also a Reiki practitioner. For further information about these services, please contact myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org

**GPZC
P.O. Box 3362
Barrington, IL 60011**



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

608-325-6248

August, 2010

1	2	3 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	4 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	5 5:30 am Zazen	6	7 9am Zazen
8	9	10 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	11 5:30 am Zazen (no evening zazen)	12 Sesshin	13 Sesshin	14 Sesshin 9am Zazen
15 Sesshin (Ango Ends)	16	17 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	18 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	19 5:30 am Zazen	20	21 9am Zazen
22	23	24 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	25 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	26	27	28 8:30 am Intro Workshop
29	30	31 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion				

September, 2010

			1 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	2 5:30 am Zazen	3	4 EFP pt 1 9am Zazen
5	6 Labor Day	7 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	8 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	9 5:30 am Zazen	10	11 8:30 am Intro Workshop
12	13	14 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	15 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	16 5:30 am Zazen	17 Zazenkai	18 EFP pt 2 Zazenkai 9am Zazen
19 Zazenkai	20	21 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	22 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	23 5:30 am Zazen	24	25 9am Zazen
26	27	28 5:30 am Zazen BTC Class 6:30p	29 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	30 5:30 am Zazen	1 (Oct)	2 (Oct) EFP pt 3 9am Zazen

October, 2010

3	4	5 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen & Discussion	6 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	7 5:30 am Zazen	8 Sesshin	9 Sesshin
10 Sesshin	11 Sesshin Columbus Day	12 5:30 am Zazen BTC Class 6:30p	13 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	14 5:30 am Zazen	15	16 EFP pt 4 9am Zazen
17	18	19 5:30 am Zazen BTC Class 6:30p	20 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	21 5:30 am Zazen	22	23 8:30 am Intro Workshop
24	25	26 5:30 am Zazen BTC Class 6:30p	27 5:30 am Zazen 7:00p Zazen	28 5:30 am Zazen	29	30 EFP pt 5 9am Zazen

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

847-274-4793

August, 2010

1 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7 <i>9am Zazen</i>
8 <i>7 pm Zazen & Teisho</i>	9	10	11	12 <i>Sesshin</i>	13 <i>Sesshin</i>	14 <i>Sesshin</i>
15 <i>Sesshin</i> <i>6:15 Tea</i> <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	16	17	18	19	20	21 <i>8:30 am</i> <i>Intro Workshop</i>
22 <i>7 pm Zazen</i>	23	24	25	26	27	28 <i>9am Zazen</i>
29 <i>7 pm Zazen & Fusatsu</i>	30	31				

September, 2010

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

October, 2010

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