



# Great Plains Zen Center



*Sangha Newsletter*

*August through October 2015*

## **Peaceful Way Sesshin – August 20-23**

The devastating effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 & 9, 1941), along with the enormous suffering caused by war, genocide and all aggression throughout human history were the inspiration for this “Peaceful Way” sesshin. Along with the practices of zazen, service, oryoki and work, which comprise our typical sesshin, we will incorporate the practice of metta bhavana (lovingkindness meditation) and the Five Buddha Families Mandala.

We would especially like to dedicate our practice during this sesshin to the well being of all indigenous people in America (Native Americans) and throughout the world, to whom so much harm has been done and continues to be done. (*Please see the related article on the upcoming Native American Bearing Witness Retreat.*) The final evening of sesshin, Saturday night 8/22 we will have the **Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony** (*see related article*).

The cost for this retreat is \$150 for members; \$180 for non-members. This fee includes lodging and all meals. Part time attendance is permitted (\$50/night for members; \$60/night for non-members).

*“When we bear witness, when we become the situation---the right action arises by itself. We don't have to worry about what to do. We don't have to figure out solutions ahead of time. Peacemaking is the functioning of bearing witness.” – Roshi Bernie Glassman*

## **Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony – August 22**

The Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony takes place at 8 PM Saturday 8/22 during our August Peaceful Way Sesshin. **All are welcome to attend this special event, even if not attending the rest of sesshin. Those coming from out of town are welcome to spend Saturday night at Myoshinji and join us for early morning zazen and an informal breakfast at the conclusion of the sesshin.** This year, we will do a slightly different version of the Gate of Sweet Nectar, one more closely aligned with those who helped develop the liturgy over the years. This version features sung, spoken, and chanted passages, as well as drum, conch, and bells.

The Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony is based on a sutra commonly chanted in Japanese monasteries today, called the Kan Ro Mon. 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. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a priest named Zuiho Menzan added some Shingon ritual, creating the version we are familiar with today.

Roshi Bernie Glassman, founder of the Zen Peacemaker Order, was very drawn to the ceremony, which is about bringing nourishment to those who are forgotten, marginalized and not cared for. He began working on a translation of the sutra with his teacher, Maezumi Roshi, over 35 years ago. It continues to change and has acquired elements from other spiritual traditions, such as the Hebrew psalm translation (“This is our life, the length of our days...”). The Gate of Sweet Nectar is regularly chanted during established and upcoming Bearing Witness Retreats --- Auschwitz, Rwanda, Black Hills, Bosnia and street retreats in many locations. It is chanted weekly or monthly at some centers and individuals have taken on the practice of chanting it regularly at home.

The Gate of Sweet Nectar begins with a beautiful song by noted kirtan singer, Krishna Das, inviting all to partake in the meal, followed by an invocation of the Ten Buddhas. In the next part, we raise the Bodhi Mind, declaring our intent to invite all those who hunger to partake in a meal to ease their distress. We then actively invite hungry spirits, praying that their throats be opened so that they can receive the offering presented. We invite the five Buddha families, which represent energies in our lives and functioning: Buddha family (spiritual foundation, meditation); Vajra family (study, not being ignorant, not getting angry); Ratna family (livelihood, generosity, resources); Karma family (social action, right intention); and Padma family (Integration, relationship). At the heart of the ceremony are the Dharanis of Raising the Bodhi Mind and Giving the Bodhisattva Precepts, amid much celebration with conch and bells. The ceremony finishes with the transference of merit and a dedication that includes the names of friends and relatives who have passed on. Following the ceremony, we have a candlelight procession to shrines around the grounds. Please join us for this powerful ceremony. *We also ask that you bring donations of non-perishable food items that will be taken to the local food pantry after the ceremony. Please email if you will be attending the ceremony– [myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org](mailto:myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org)*

## **Beginner's Mind Sesshin – September 18-20**

Beginner's Mind Sesshin is designed to help those newer to practice learn about all facets of retreat procedures and activities, including taking meals in the formal 3-bowl oryoki style, and participating in daily liturgical services. Because time is set aside for instruction and explanation throughout each day, this is an ideal first retreat experience.

The cost for this retreat is \$75 for both members and non-members. This fee includes lodging and all meals.

**O-Higan – September 20-26**

The autumnal equinox occurs on September 23 this year. In Japan, O-Higan, the week of the autumnal equinox, is called prajna week. During this time, we focus especially on the practice of the six paramitas, which are: generosity (dana), precepts (sila), patience (kshanti), effort (virya), concentration (dhyana) and wisdom (prajna). Everyone is encouraged to take on a practice of focusing on each paramita in turn during the month of September.

**Three-Day Bodhidharma Sesshin – October 8-11**

Our October retreat begins on Thursday evening, October 8, and concludes Sunday morning, October 11. The cost for this retreat is \$150 for members; \$180 for non-members. This fee includes lodging and all meals. Part time attendance is permitted (\$50/night for members; \$60/night for non-members).

**Upcoming Memorial Dates**

**August 3** is the annual memorial date for **Dajian Huineng** (638-713), the Sixth Chinese Ancestor teacher in our lineage. Master Huineng is revered by all five of the traditional Zen schools. Much of what we know about the Sixth Ancestor comes from *The Platform Sutra*, which is thought to have been an oral teaching of Master Huineng as recorded by his student, Fahai.

On **September 29** of each year, we honor the two founders of the Japanese Soto School, **Eihei Dogen Dai Osho** (1200-1253) and **Soji Keizan Dai Osho** (1268-1325). Dogen Zenji made the perilous trip to China to fulfill his vow to fully awaken. After study with the great Chinese Master Tiantong Rujing, he returned to Japan to establish Japanese Soto Zen. He is revered not only in Zen circles, but also as one of the greatest Japanese philosophers of all time. Keizan Zenji came three Dharma generations later, having studied with Dogen Zenji's successor, Koun Ejo and his successor, Tetsu Gikai. Keizan Zenji is especially known for his work, *The Record of Transmitting the Light (Denko Roku)*. Dogen Zenji was strict and deeply determined, while Keizan Zenji was more gentle and credited with broadening and revitalizing the Soto School. Thus the two founders are sometimes referred to as the father and mother of the Soto School respectively.

The annual memorial date for **Bodhidharma** is **October 5**. Bodhidharma is a legendary figure who is thought to have lived in the late 5th and early 6th centuries and is the first Chinese Zen Ancestor teacher, 28th in our lineage. Bodhidharma is said to have journeyed from India to bring the teachings of Zen to China. Bodhidharma embodies the spirit of fiercely determined zazen and an unflinching determination to pursue true awakening. His terse, straightforward statements and irreverence for political favor have become the subject of numerous Zen koans.

**Monroe Crop Hunger Walk – October 18**

GPZC is participating in a Crop Hunger Walk, Sunday, October 18 starting at 1 PM in Monroe, Wisconsin. The walk is a collaborative effort between a number of Monroe area churches (including GPZC) and the World Church Service.

We would like to get as many walkers from GPZC as possible. Each walker is responsible for soliciting "sponsors" who contribute a lump sum or per mile rate. A portion of the money raised is given to various World Church Service projects overseas and the rest goes to local resources such as Green County Food Pantry or Second Harvest Foodbank (where some of us volunteered in the past). The majority of overseas projects are for refugee assistance, and also for global hunger and disaster relief and recovery operations.

This is a great way for GPZC members to work with other faith communities to make a difference locally and internationally and to have fun. And, of course, each participant will get a t-shirt. The steering committee is aiming to raise about \$3,000 overall, with each faith community setting a goal for their walkers. GPZC participants will meet at Myoshinji prior to the walk, which will take place in the city of Monroe (1-mile and 3-mile routes are planned). **Please let Roshi know if you would like to participate in the walk.** [myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org](mailto:myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org)

**Native American Bearing Witness Retreat**

Myoyu Roshi will attend the Native American Bearing Witness Retreat in the Black Hills, South Dakota, August 10-14. This retreat is jointly led by Spirit Holders from the Lakota Nation and Zen Peacemaker Order. The following excerpt from the ZPO website describes the motivation for having this retreat.

*First nations around the world have lost their lands, languages, and ways of life at the hands of American and European colonialists pursuing an agenda of domination, genocide, theft, and the elimination of indigenous cultures and identities. Entire nations have vanished. This catastrophe is not just theirs; it belongs to all humans, and to the earth itself, for it has been succeeded by the calamitous loss of animals and plants, and the specter of global warming.*

*What does it say about us and our separation from this earth? What does it say about our relationship not just to biodiversity, but to human diversity? What does it say about our cultural assumptions of superiority and how they continue to underlie our historical narratives? It is time to bear witness to our systems of thought and values, and to their actions and results that persist to this very day.*

The retreat will be attended by several hundred people, including member of various tribes throughout the US and indigenous people from around the world. For more information, please visit the ZPO website: <http://zenpeacemakers.org/2015-native-american-bearing-witness-retreat/>.

## Shuso Hossen Ceremony Held August 1

Shuso Hossen–Dharma Dialogue with the Head Trainee (Ryūzan) was held at the conclusion of the July Weeklong Sesshin. In the Japanese Zen tradition, this is an important rite of passage to becoming a senior student. Ryūzan can now give Dharma Talks and officiate services. The ceremony consisted of a procession from the Jizo Garden accompanied by a dramatic drum roll, a talk on Case 57 from the Blue Cliff Record (*Joshu's Country Oaf*) given by Shuso (Ryuzan) and a lively question and answer exchange in which any Sangha member could participate. Ryūzan successfully fended off all challengers with much warmth and humor.

On the previous evening, Honsoku Gyocha (Main Case Tea) took place, starting with a beautiful sunset sitting accompanied by 108 hits of the hanging bell (densho). Congratulations to Ryūzan and to all of the ceremony participants who worked hard to perform these complex ceremonies with dignity and poise.



## Registration for GPZC Events

To register for GPZC events, please register/pay online at [www.greatplainszen.org](http://www.greatplainszen.org). Please register for any sesshin, zazenkai 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.



## 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

## 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, August 8, September 12 and October 17, and run from 8:30-11:30 AM, followed by an informal lunch.
- Workshops at **Myoshinji** (Wisconsin) will be held Saturdays, September 12 and October 17 (No workshop in August at Myoshinji). 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.*

**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](mailto: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](http://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

**August 2015**

2	3 <i>Hui-neng Memorial Day</i>	4	5	6	7 (closed)	8 (closed)
9	10	11	12	13	14 (closed)	15 (closed)
16	17	18	19	20 <i>Peaceful Way Sesshin</i>	21 <i>Peaceful Way Sesshin</i>	22 <i>9am Zazen Peaceful Way Sesshin *</i>
23 <i>Peaceful Way Sesshin</i>	24	25	26	27	28 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00p Zazen</i>	29 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>
30	31	*Gate of Sweet Nectar Ceremony – 8:00 PM • Saturday, August 22.				

**September 2015**

		1	2	3	4 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00 p Zazen</i>	5 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>
6	7 <i>Labor Day</i>	8	9	10	11 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00p Zazen</i>	12 <i>8:30 am Intro Workshop</i>
13	14	15	16	17	18 <b>Sesshin</b>	19 <b>Sesshin</b> <i>9am Zazen</i>
20 <b>Sesshin</b>	21	22	23	24	25 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00p Zazen</i>	26 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>
27	28	29 <i>Founders' Day– Dogen Zenji &amp; Keizan Zenji</i>	30			

**October 2015**

				1	2 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00 p Zazen</i>	3 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>
4	5 <i>Bodhidharma Memorial Day</i>	6	7	8 <b>Sesshin</b>	9 <b>Sesshin</b>	10 <b>Sesshin</b> <i>9am Zazen</i>
11 <b>Sesshin</b>	12	13	14	15	16 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00 p Zazen</i>	17 <i>8:30 am Intro Workshop</i>
18 <b>Crop Hunger Walk</b>	19	20	21	22	23 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00 p Zazen</i>	24 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>
25	26	27	28	29	30 <i>5:30a Zazen &amp; Service 7:00p Zazen</i>	31 <i>8:30am Service 9am Zazen</i>

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

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

**August 2015**

2 7:00 pm Zazen & Fusatsu	3 <b>Hui-neng Memorial Day</b>	4	5	6	7	8 8:30 am Intro Workshop
9 7 pm Zazen	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 7 pm Zazen	17	18	19	20 <b>Peaceful Way Sesshin</b>	21 <b>Peaceful Way Sesshin</b>	22 <b>Peaceful Way Sesshin</b>
23 <b>Peaceful Way Sesshin</b> 7 pm Zazen	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 6:15p * 7:00p Zazen & Teisho	31	* 8/30: Council @ 6:15				

**September 2015**

		1	2	3	4	5
6 7 pm Zazen	7 <b>Labor Day</b>	8	9	10	11	12 8:30 am Intro Workshop
13 7:00 pm Zazen & Fusatsu	14	15	16	17	18 <b>Sesshin</b>	19 <b>Sesshin</b>
20 <b>Sesshin</b> 7 pm Zazen	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 6:15p Tea 7:00p Zazen & Teisho	28	29 <b>Foudners' Day– Dogen Zenji &amp; Keizan Zenji</b>	30			

**October 2015**

* 10/25: Council @ 6:15				1	2	3
4 7:00 pm Zazen & Fusatsu	5 <b>Bodhidharma Memorial Day</b>	6	7	8 <b>Sesshin</b>	9 <b>Sesshin</b>	10 <b>Sesshin</b>
11 <b>Sesshin</b> 7 pm Zazen	12	13	14	15	16	17 8:30 am Intro Workshop
18 7 pm Zazen	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 6:15p * 7:00p Zazen & Teisho	26	27	28	29	30	31