



Great Plains Zen Center

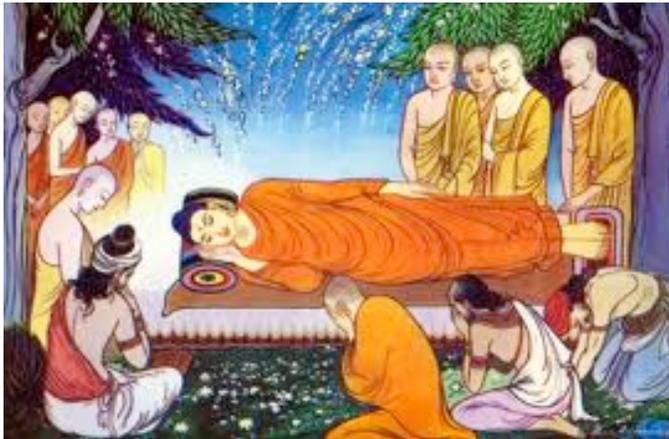


Sangha Newsletter

February through April, 2014

Nirvana Day Zazenkai – February 7-9

Our annual observance of Nirvana Day, commemorating the day Shakyamuni Buddha passed from this realm of teaching and entered parinirvana at the age of 80, will take place during the February retreat. This zazenkai begins on Friday evening (2/7), and runs through Sunday morning (2/9), and will include a special service on Saturday, February 8.



Buddha entering Nirvana.

Nirvana Day is traditionally observed on February 15.

Beginner's Mind Sesshin – March 21-23

Those who are in the early stages of their practice are encouraged to join us in March at *Myoshinji*—our center's home in Monroe, Wisconsin—for our *Beginner's Mind Sesshin*. *Sesshin* (intensive practice retreats) are an important part of Zen practice. 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. The sesshin begins Friday evening (3/21) and concludes Sunday morning (3/23). *The cost of this retreat is \$75 and includes overnight lodging Friday & Saturday, as well as all meals.*

Registration for GPZC Events

To register, for GPZC events, please *register/pay online at www.greatplainszen.org*. 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.

(Please note that there is no retreat scheduled for April.)

Ohigan – March 17-23

Ohigan refers to two week-long Buddhist observances, each of which starts 3 days prior to the March or September equinox and concludes three days after. The March equinox this year occurs on March 20, so the Ohigan week runs from March 17-23. In the northern hemisphere, this is the Spring or Vernal Equinox. The word “equinox” comes from the Latin, meaning “equal nights.” On these two days of the year, day and night are approximately equal in length and the earth's axis is neutral with respect to the sun, neither pointed toward nor away. The equinox is a time of transition, of change, from shorter to longer or longer to shorter days. It is traditionally said that neither heat nor cold last beyond the equinox, so it also symbolizes impermanence or the constant change of the seasons throughout the year. It also signifies the inevitable transition from life to death. In Japan, people return to take care of the graves of their parents and ancestors. Water is poured over the headstone to clean the gravesite and debris is removed. Fresh offerings of water, incense and treats are made and sutras are chanted.

The word “*higan*” literally means “the other shore” (“o” is an honorific prefix, as in “*okesa*” referring to a monk's robe). Ohigan is traditionally a time to renew our determination in our practice. “Crossing over to the other shore” really means to see clearly, to see that this very shore on which we stand **is** the other shore. It is common for Buddhists to focus on study of the six paramitas: *dana* (giving); *sila* (precepts); *ksanti* (patience); *virya* (energy); *samadhi* (concentration); and *prajna* (wisdom) at this time. These qualities are in fact what we need to cultivate and practice in order to make the ground fertile for our own awakening.

Buddha's Birthday Celebration – Sunday, April 13

Everyone is invited to join in our celebration of Buddha's Birthday on April 13, at Countryside Church in Palatine, from 3:00-4:30 p.m. Children of all ages and their parents are especially encouraged to attend. The ceremony includes a beautiful “flower house” for the Baby Buddha, a short service in which children can play the bells, a very short meditation activity, a music activity and of course, Buddha's birthday cake.

According to our tradition, the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, was born in Nepal on April 8, 566 B.C., the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Maya. It is said that at the birth of the Buddha, there were celestial birds singing beautiful songs, beautiful flowers, and a sweet gentle rain bathing the Baby Buddha. During our ceremony, each participant has the opportunity to ladle sweet tea over the statue of the Buddha in honor of this occasion. The flower house, like the flowers offered on the altar, reminds us of the beauty, vibrancy and ultimately, impermanence of life. *(continued...)*

Buddha's Birthday Celebration – continued...

We hope everyone will join us for this special event. Please register in advance, online at www.greatplainszen.org, by e-mailing Roshi at myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org or by calling 608-325-6248. Please indicate the ages of your children.

Community Service Volunteer Opportunities

We have had an encouraging response to our Community Service Interest Survey. The GPZC Board is interested in organizing some community service volunteer opportunities for members and friends of the Zen Center. Roshi has coordinated some events near Myoshinji with considerable success. We will be looking for similar opportunities in Chicago & the nearby suburban areas as well. Our hope is that these events will provide opportunities for our sangha to be of service to our communities—fulfilling the precept, “do good for others” and also give sangha members a way to engage in some social activities together, outside of our group zazen practice.

Survey respondents can submit general information about their preferences for *when* they are most available, and will be invited to events that are close to home and fit their availability.

We would welcome suggestions for volunteer opportunities in the Monroe, WI area and in the Chicago and West- & Northwest Suburban areas. As we get this program started, we will look for events that are “1-time” commitments, though we may repeat those that work well for all those involved. Leads we will follow include: Lake County Food Bank; PADS; animal shelters; Green County Family Promise; REST (the volunteer respite care program run by Marklund Children’s Home); Second Harvest in Madison and others. We’ll also start by looking for opportunities that can be shared by 3 or more people.

If you would like to join us, please fill out the survey at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/10EQZOsas6zDGeqF-D-Glpkvl6lpPhqxaziHfEUOmNH4/viewform>

Please look for information about our ongoing participation in Green County Family Promise and announcements about upcoming opportunities on the Community Involvement page of our website: www.greatplainszen.org/community.

GPZC Member Featured in Photography Show

Congratulations to Anneise Shogaku Vandre on her recent photography show at Wine Guyz in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Shogaku’s photographs were exhibited along with those of two other photographers, Erik Thomsen and Margie Hylkema. The opening on January 9 was packed with interested patrons coming to see the unique exhibit, which featured photos of Wisconsin landscapes, plants and animals. The show ran through February 1 and was a huge success. You can see Shogaku’s photo website at <http://www.owlseyeimages.com>

**Baian Hakuju Memorial Observed February 4**

February 4 marks the anniversary of the passing of Baian Hakuju Kuroda, Roshi, (1898 – 1978), Maezumi Roshi’s father and main teacher. Baian Hakuju became abbot of Koshin-ji in Otawara City, Japan in 1922. He rebuilt Koshin-ji after a major fire and raised 8 sons there along with his wife, Yoshi Kuroda. Maezumi Roshi was their third son and took the surname Maezumi instead of the family name, Kuroda, because his aunt had no male offspring to continue the name. Baian Hakuju held many important positions including Vice Director of Soji-ji (one of the two head monasteries of the Soto Zen School in Japan), head of the Judiciary of the Soto School and chairman of the Komazawa Society. He is the honorary founder of Zen Center of Los Angeles/Busshin-ji. We chant Baian Hakuju Kuroda, Roshi’s name during morning service as the 85th ancestor teacher in our lineage.

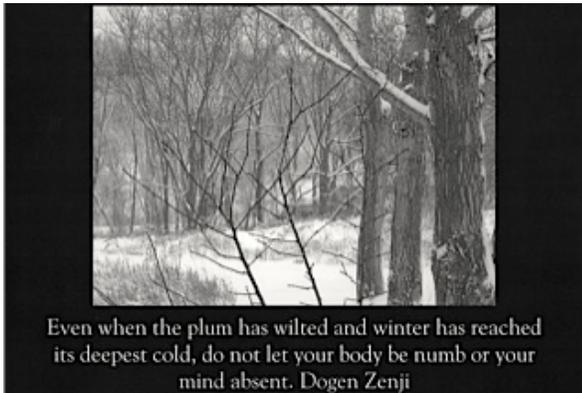
Memorial Observations in March

The annual memorial date of Tung-shan Liang-chieh (Tozan Ryokai), one of the two founders of the Caodong (Soto) School in China, is March 8. The other founder, Master Sozan, is not in our direct lineage. Tung-shan’s aptitude for Zen became apparent at a young age. He asked his teacher what the Heart Sutra meant by “No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind” when he certainly had eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. We chant Master Tozan’s name in our lineage as the 45th ancestor.

March 28 is the annual memorial date of Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, a teacher not only of Maezumi Roshi, but of Kapleau Roshi, Eido Roshi and Aitken Roshi. Yasutani Roshi’s “Introductory Lectures on Zen Training” in the book *Three Pillars of Zen* form the basis for introducing new students to Zen practice at many centers, including our own. Yasutani Roshi was born into poverty and adopted at 5 years of age, going to live at a country temple. He studied Zen with various teachers, but felt dissatisfied. He had a 10-year career as an elementary school teacher and principal, married and had five children. At 40, he returned to his vocation as a Buddhist priest and soon met his teacher, Harada Sogaku Roshi, at last experiencing authentic realization. Yasutani Roshi established an organization known as Sanbokyodan, breaking with the established Soto School. He was a controversial but highly influential teacher. Maezumi Roshi met Yasutani Roshi in Los Angeles and studied koans with him over the following years, culminating in dharma succession from Yasutani Roshi in 1970.

Great Plains Photo Calendars Available

A limited number of Great Plains Zen Center calendars are left for purchase. This full-sized, custom wall calendar costs \$20 and features beautiful photographs of Myoshinji taken by Sangha members, accompanying inspirational quotes and dates of major Buddhist events and memorials. To order a calendar, e-mail Roshi at myoyu.roshi@greatplainszen.org, call 608-325-6248, or pick one up in person at Myoshinji or at Sunday night zazen at Countryside Church in Palatine. [Sample page below...]



Weekly Schedule at Myoshinji

Early morning sitting takes place at Myoshinji at 5:30 on Friday with a morning service following. Evening zazen takes place Wednesdays, Thursdays and 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.

Manifesting the Great Vow

Our *Manifesting the Great Vow* class concluded January 26. This twelve-week course consisted of 6 discussion classes and 3 talks at each location (Palatine and Monroe) using *Living by Vow* by Shohaku Okumura Roshi as the main text. Topics included verses we regularly chant during weekly and sesshin practice: the Four Bodhisattva Vows, Gatha of Atonement, Three Refuges, Verse of the Kesa, Gatha on Opening the Sutra, and various meal chants. The classes were well attended. Participants commented that they felt they had gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of our vows and chants and that Okumura Roshi's book provided a helpful historical context and tied these into our contemporary practice and lives. Those attending the classes and talks appreciated hearing perspectives different from their own, but it was also noted that the book reinforced the understanding that had already arisen through chanting these verses over and over with a sincere and open mind during sesshin and weekly practice. Okumura Roshi's insightful scholarship regarding Dogen Zenji's writings on the subject of our vows and chants was also greatly appreciated. Based on this positive response, we plan to have more class series devoted to elements of our liturgy in the near future.

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, February 22, March 29 and April 26 and run from 8:30-11:30 AM, followed by an informal lunch.

- Workshop at **Myoshinji** (Wisconsin) will be held Saturdays, February 22, March 15 and April 12. 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 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 at 6:15 pm where we will alternate between *Council* discussion – or for informal *Tea and Chat* prior to sitting. This is an opportunity to just visit and for newcomers and “regulars” alike to get to know one another in an informal setting. Please see the calendar for specific dates for these activities

Remaining Retreat dates for 2014:

- April* * (No sesshin in April)
- May 15-18 3 day sesshin
- June 8-14 7 day sesshin (Sun - Sat)
- July 11-13 zazenkai
- August 14-17 3 Day Sesshin (Th-Sun)
- Sept. 19-21 Beginner's Mind Sesshin
- October 9-12 Bodhidharma Sesshin
- Nov 7-9 zazenkai
- Dec. 3-7 Rohatsu sesshin (Wed - Sun)

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

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 NEW mailing address:

PO Box 2077
Palatine, IL 60078-2077

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

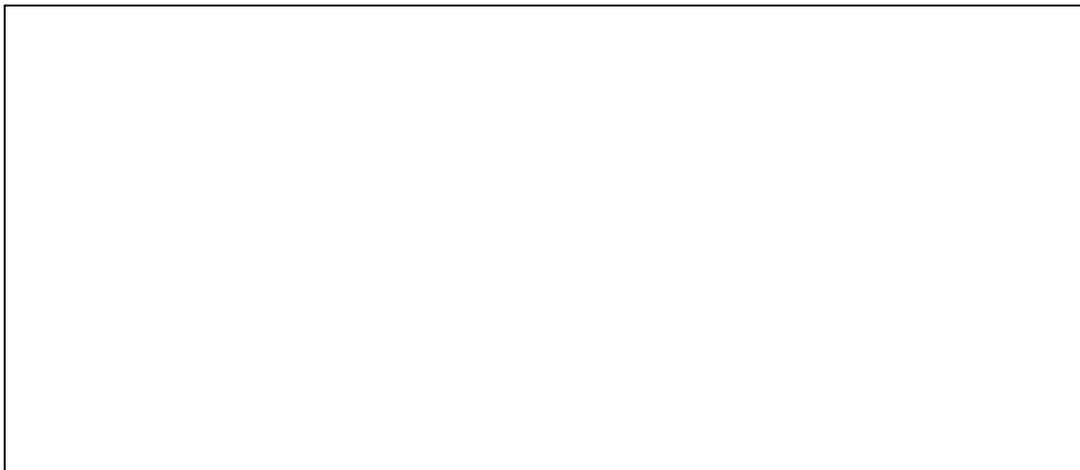
Check out our website: <http://www.greatplainszen.org>

If you haven't opened the GPZC website recently, please visit! Among the changes are more pictures, a community webpage listing local volunteer opportunities and the text of some children's Dharma songs on the Practice for Children page. Special thanks to Drake Andersen and Shingetsu Hellige, our webmasters!

GPZC

P.O. Box 2077

Palatine, IL 60078-2077



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

W7762 Falk Rd • Monroe, WI • 608-325-6248

February 2014

						1 8:30am Service 9am Zazen
2	3	4	5 7:00p Zazen	6 7:00p Zazen	7 Zazenkai	8 Zazenkai 9:00am Zazen
9 Zazenkai	10	11	12 7:00p Zazen	13 7:00p Zazen	14 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	15 Nirvana Day 8:30am Service 9am Zazen
16	17 <i>Presidents' Day</i>	18	19 7:00p Zazen	20 7:00p Zazen	21 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	22 8:30 am Intro Workshop
23	24	25	26 7:00p Zazen	27 7:00p Zazen	28 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	1 (March) 8:30am Service 9am Zazen

March 2014

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

April 2014

		1	2 7:00p Zazen	3 7:00p Zazen	4 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	5 8:30am Service 9:00am Zazen,
6	7	8 Buddha's Birthday	9 7:00p Zazen	10 7:00p Zazen	11 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	12 8:30 am Intro Workshop
13	14	15	16 7:00p Zazen	17 7:00p Zazen	18 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	19 8:30am Service 9:00am Zazen
20 Easter	21	22	23 7:00p Zazen	24 7:00p Zazen	25 5:30a Zazen & Service 7:00p Zazen	26 8:30am Service 9:00am Zazen
27	28	29	30 7:00p Zazen			

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

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

February 2014

						1
2 6:15p Tea 7:00p Zazen & Teisho	3	4	5	6	7 Zazenkai	8 Zazenkai
9 Zazenkai 7:00p Zazen	10	11	12	13	14	15 Nirvana Day
16 7:00p Zazen & Fusatsu	17 Presidents' Day	18	19	20	21	22 8:30 am Intro Workshop
23 7:00p Zazen	24	25	26	27	28	1 (March)

March 2014

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

April 2014

		1	2	3	4	5
6 6:15p Tea 7:00p Zazen & Teisho	7	8 Buddha's Birthday	9	10	11	12
13 3pm Buddha's Birthday-CCUU 7 pm Zazen	14	15	16	17	18 Good Friday	19
20 Easter 7 pm Zazen	21	22	23	24	25	26 8:30 am Intro Workshop
27 7 pm Zazen & Fusatsu	28	29	30			