



## **ZRS Biannual Newsletter**

Vol. 4 October 2018

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### **President Greeting**

*Liaoran Tess Grey, Current Board President*

#### ***Sangha-wide meeting on ZRS financial future***

*Saturday, November 3, 2018, following practice*

*You are invited to bring a dish to share*

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Dear sangha family and friends,

The solstice has passed and the days are getting shorter now; soon the evenings will be chilly again, and not so very long after that, the snow will begin to fall and another year will have come and gone. Time and life do not wait for us; our observation of reality shows us the truths of sickness, old age, and death. This is the "great matter" of birth and death, and our matriarchs and patriarchs exhort us to take heed and to attend to our practice so we can wake up, be liberated, and share this liberation with all sentient beings.

Our lives are busy and full--and we often feel acutely that they are stressful, difficult, confusing. We are all deeply blessed, though--we have a strong sangha, an excellent facility to practice in, multiple opportunities to fit service and practice into our schedules so that we can return to our contemplation of the great matter. I have seen in my experience how this practice enables me to engage with the aspects of my life that seem overwhelming or uncertain, as I think many of us have. There is a strength and capacity for presence and curious, sincere engagement that grows out of meditation.

The sangha will be calling on this curiosity and sincere engagement from all of us this season. On November 3rd, we will be holding a potluck and meeting after our regular sit, in order to discuss the sangha's desires,

capacity, and ideas for our financial goals and the continuation of our community and practice. We have the fortune of material support for our activities due to the great generosity of many, but we as a community also have the responsibility to determine what we feel is sustainable and necessary in the long-term. Please do all that you can to hold this date on your calendar and to attend this sit and meeting, and watch for more information to be released on the email list as the date approaches.

Liaoran Tess Grey

### **Sharing the Dharma**

*Taiso Hannya Byran Bartow Roshi,  
ZRS Head Priest*

#### ***About our Sangha and Place of Practice***

In this article, I want to briefly explore the meaning of Sangha, with a perspective which departs a little from the usual. Ultimately, the place of practice is "no-where" which is every-where, but we do benefit with a place to gather in mutual support.

Our first vow is, "However innumerable all beings are, I vow to serve and liberate them all." ...Traditionally, "Beings are numberless, I vow to free them." This is the crux of the Mahayana movement in Buddhism, which is the great "river" through which we approach zen practice. Appending the phrase "in my own mind" is attributed by his contemporaneous followers to Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen.

What does this have to do with Sangha? Sangha is the cradle for our practice and one of the three refuges or

jewels which are the essence of Zen Buddhist practice. In the simplest sense, serving and freeing innumerable beings is a daunting matter. I try to approach this using, “what’s at arm’s length” as a lens. Our friend Tonen reminded me of this once when I expressed the sorrow of seeing all the suffering in the world... of course, I only see pictures of suffering that isn’t in immediate experience – and what can be done is necessarily a matter of immediate action. Tonen helped me to recognize that wallowing in my sorrow could be pitfall of romantic indulgence and inaction. Still, we must be careful not to use this as an evasion of the vow; rather as a springboard for actualizing this instead of freezing.

In one sense, we come together as a Sangha to support the transformation of our mutual interest in salvation and cessation of suffering with the bodhisattva vow – with the taste of awakening... when all being(s) finally transformed, “I” too will pass through.

*Gate, Gate, Para Gate, Parasam Gate, Bodi Swaha!*

Reishin, with the help of many others in actualizing this vow, has given a tremendous gift to support our Sangha. She personally took on the mortgage and serves as our landlord. The mortgage contract she holds for the building where we practice together comes due in June of 2020. On June 7 this year, Reishin asked us to consider whether we are ready to assume this role as a Sangha. She sent the board of ZRS this simple and humble request:

*“I would like to simplify my life and hope that ZRS can purchase the building by June 2020 when the current mortgage expires...if possible, I would like to know your decision by December 2019 so that I can figure out how to refinance the building, if necessary.”*

And she has assured us this is not an ultimatum, she is willing to try to continue in her service to us as landlord, if this is needed.

As we have begun to announce in our meetings, we are planning to meet as a Sangha to consider this on November 3rd after our regular practice. In this article, I wanted to share this part of how I see our challenge. Sometimes we think of Sangha in terms of what we may offer the community as a place of refuge, and as a small group, we don’t do as much as some much larger groups we sometimes admire. Still, our practice is open to all who want to practice the vow of liberation for all being(s), and particularly for us in support of practice

together, and even more particularly... “in our own minds.”

I don’t know if we will find that we are ready to assume the responsibility for the building, but I understand Reishin’s invitation through this lens, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to contemplate this with you.

With Love and Respect,

taiso

### ZRS Board Updates

*Liaoran Tess Grey, President*

*Kai Hui Jill Buckmaster, Treasurer*

*Jian Zhi Peter Tolly, Secretary*

### **Treasurers Update**

For those of you that are curious about how things are going financially, I have compiled a 3 year comparison of our monthly average income and expenses, and a comparison of our year-end fund balances.

	<b>Dec 31 201 6</b>	<b>Dec 31 2017</b>	<b>July 31 2018</b>
Fund Balances			
Cash for Operations	\$1,816	\$5,731	\$5,739
Cash in Savings / Building Fund	17,000	20,015	20,024
Cash And Cash equivalents	\$18,816	\$25,746	\$25,763

	<b>2016 Average</b>	<b>2017 Aver age</b>	<b>2018 Aver age</b>
Average Monthly Income & Expense			
Monthly			
Pledges	\$580	\$666	\$544
Year-end			
Donations	135	514	-
Basket			
Donations	154	328	326
Small Group			
Donations		53	55
Scrip & Other Misc.	187	76	102
Average Monthly Income	\$1,056	\$1,637	\$1,027

Average Monthly Expenses	(1,171)	(1,042)	(1,050)
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Income less Expenses	(\$115)	\$595	(\$23)
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Average Monthly Expenses	2016 Average	2017 Average	2018 Average
Rent	\$900	\$900	\$950
Internet & Website	60	36	38
Repairs & Supplies	9	16	24
Insurance	35	32	
Utilities	-	23	33
Other	167	35	5
	\$1,171	\$1,042	\$1,050

For those interested in greater financial detail, 2018 financial reports are posted on the sangha bulletin board.

Thank you all for your generous donations of time and money!  
Kai Hui - Jill Buckmaster

**Sangha in Action**  
*Zen Experiences for Everyday Life*

**Zen River Sangha Campfire Potluck**

Taiso and Mitra would love to invite you all down to our place outside of Ripon for an evening of outdoor community. Enjoy hot dogs, s'mores and a fiery good time. Family and friends are more than welcome. Bring a chair, your favorite beverage and a dish to pass. Any guitar players out there? Ukuleles? We'd love to hear you!

Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> 5:30PM

W14273 Sheldon Rd  
Brandon, WI 53919

Please R.S.V.P Mitra at [robinaudrey19@gmail.com](mailto:robinaudrey19@gmail.com) or 920 896-2770

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**Fall 2018 Schedule**  
**Qigong & Meditation**

- \* Session I – Sundays, October 7-28
- \* Session II – Sundays, November 4-25  
9:00-9:45 a.m.  
\$20 donation per session for ZRS

**Intermediate Yoga**

- \* Sundays, October 7- November 25  
10:00-11:00 a.m. Drop-in class, anyone welcome! \$5.00 donation per class for ZRS

\*If this is your first class at ZRS, please arrive 15 minutes earlier for paperwork. For more info, email Denise at [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org) Check the ZRS calendar for cancellations before coming to class.

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***Be Hollow***

An everyday experience in Zen practice

For me, the best advice to quiet the normal chatter during a sit is to breathe and repeat the word “listen.” This advice also has practical application.

For example, the results of my most recent health check showed slightly elevated risk factors due to sloppy habits. The doctor suggested a set of unnamed prescriptions, and I bristled at this. I favor meditation first and home remedy second where possible, and so far, take no prescription medications. I respect Western medicine. I just steer clear of it if possible.

I sat with this challenge and was fully ready to listen for any advice from Intuition. On my next Thursday night sit, the phrase “Be Hollow” exploded into my entire being. Very compelling, but I needed a little more specific instruction.

The next Thursday, the word “subtract” arrived. This is better, as I now had an action verb. But still not specific enough.

Next sit, a still more specific suggestion with the phrase “subtract sugars in three forms.” After a little web surfing, I found those three forms. Fortunately, they all start with the letter “s,” making them easy to remember. They are sugar (i.e. processed), stealth sugars (sugar that goes by an alternate name such as sucrose, fructose, maltodextrin, nectar, etc.), and syrups (e.g. corn syrup, rice syrup, barley syrup, cane syrup, etc.).

Now I had something to work with. My directive was to be hollow by subtracting sugar, stealth sugars and syrups. In 15 weeks, I have lost 30 pounds. And I continue to lose approximately two pounds per week. My guess is in six months I should be down roughly 50 pounds.

I thought this was all the instruction I needed, but on my next sit I received the phrase “subtract sludge.” Once again, not specific enough. This was followed the next morning by a coughing spell that worked free a great deal of mucous. This must have been the “sludge.” I am currently sitting with this and listening for more specifics. I suspect it may be subtracting more sloppy habits. And if the instructions stay true to form, they should all start with the letter “s.”

I do feel great and more “hollow” at least physically. Each breath is deeper than ever before, which improves my focus as well as a feeling of “true freedom and joy beyond comprehension.” I intend to keep listening for more directives, which may extend to not just body, but mind and spirit as well. Wonderful!

By Scott Wanless

### **Sangha Expressions**

*Essays, Poetry and Prose from ZRS Family and Friends*

#### ***Consciousness Uniting***

“The world presents itself to us as *real*. It is, by accounts, a very convincing presentation.”

How many forms of stimuli are there that present themselves to our consciousness, and how many more are possible that we will never be aware of? We have, after all, only five senses and even the five we have are limited in scope. Our ears can only detect a limited range of sound frequencies. Our eyes perceive an even narrower spectrum of light waves. The rest pass through us unnoticed. If there are huge swaths of the light spectrum that never interact with our cornea, how many smells must be all around us that are never delivered to our consciousness by a nose that was forged by a different set of evolutionary imperatives than that of a Bloodhound?

Our conscious awareness – of ourselves, of our environment – is a composite of these stimuli, stored through memory and arranged according to biological precepts that we assume to have a fixed and determinable nature.

And so we have this *consciousness* but, to the extent that it is shaped by a materially conditioned complex of stimuli and responses it is limited and therefore, to that same extent, it is arbitrary. Consider that it seems perfectly natural, logical even, that after reaching a count of nine we would start again at zero and repeat the process at the next order of magnitude. We do this because we, and most of the people around us, use what’s called a base-ten numeric system. Historians and anthropologists think that the base-ten numeric system was adopted by most of mankind because we have a total of ten *digits* on our right and left hands. Yet, so ubiquitous is the base-ten system that the “truth” of it seems preordained and final, that it is how the world – the clouds, the moon, and the sun – conduct their business. But in actuality, the base-ten numeric system is no more intrinsic to the mathematical orderliness of the cosmos than any other numeric system. The Sumerians and Babylonians used a base-60 number system. It’s from these civilizations that we get the 360 degree circle and the 60 minute hour. Computers use a base-two numeric system, just ones and zeros. The Mayans used a base-20 numeric system. There is no final “truth” to any of it.

So, when we speak of Logic, Reason, Common Sense, Law, Justice, Mercy, Compassion, Right Understanding and the Eightfold Path, what are we talking about? We all have our own understanding of these things based on our unique experience, even as we acknowledge that they would have been understood differently in other cultures and in distant epochs. And so we have to ask, how would our sense of reason and discernment – and then by extension, how would our *moral judgement* – change if we had a nose like a Bloodhound, or if we had sonar like a bat or a dolphin? In light of those questions, what is truly meant by “skillful means?”

There is a famous quote often ascribed (incorrectly, it turns out) to Viktor Frankl that goes: “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” It’s a nice quote, and I’m sure anyone following the contours of its edict will find some measure of relief from suffering. Indeed, much of our practice involves entering that *space* through mediation.

But the question that cries for an answer is: If the stimulus is always arbitrarily received, how can our response ever transcend that arbitrariness? The answer, it seems to me, lies in the transformative nature of pure consciousness itself. Earlier I wrote that our

consciousness is limited; and this is true so long as we experience it as “our” consciousness. But Consciousness itself (what academics would define as *consciousness qua consciousness*) is unlimited, and being unlimited it encompasses all possible stimuli, as well as all possible responses.

And so we chant: “Pure Awareness pervades the whole Universe . . .” and the transformation happens when we, “unite with this infinitely compassionate universal life.” Which then evokes “the transformational moment causing all of our masters and mentors . . .”

This is Consciousness uniting with itself – a reconciliation of opposites that were never separate.

By Christian Peterson

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**Rumination**

A sheer torrent  
my need for story:  
I can dredge for days  
but was dead  
in the flow  
from the start

\* \* \*

**Dhyana**

The unbeknownst pregnancy  
of my angst giving birth to this  
synthesis upon synthesis

\* \* \*

**Form & Emptiness**

A flame clinging to a wick, my personality  
flickers out in a moment of focus.

The people who entered the zendo  
in stillness become cold candles  
no different from dust-laden clutter  
in an undisturbed attic—just dust actually

the indistinct shift of an endless dessert  
nameless, faceless, on fire

By Jian Zhi

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**Knowing our Call of this Incarnation**

*There are two important days in our lives.  
The day we are born, and  
the day we know why we are born. ---Mark Twain*

Back in 2008 when I was in Taiwan for sabbatical leave, I read a newspaper story of a dumpling lady in Taiwan. She sold the best dumpling in a small village in southern Taiwan. She was in the news for two reasons. The first reason was that her dumpling was the best at the time in Ping-tong, a small village in southern Taiwan where she lived. The second reason was that she had a stage-3 ovarian cancer and was told only had 3 years to live. Despite that, every morning, she got up at 3:30 AM and began to work, making dumpling. No one helped her because she was a widow, and her children were working outside of Ping-Tong. Reporters were puzzled why she was working so hard and did not take rest.

“Taking a rest? “, she said, “Did I just sit there and waiting to die?”

“When I make the best dumpling and my happy customers complimented and smiled at me, that is my best medicine.” She said.

The day she was interviewed by the reporter, she had already outlived the dreadful pronouncement of death by two years. I do not know if she is still alive today. Either way, she is a good role model for us because she knew her purpose of life. She knew why she was born.

There is another example. I met an old time friend (a Kimberly-Clark colleague) at a concert in July of 2018. He was an engineer, and got laid off in 2003. I asked him what he is doing now. He said that he is building organ. Building organ requires engineering skills, metal and wood crafting, and music ears. He had learned the craft as an apprentice from a master 25 years ago before he worked for Kimberly-Clark. After working at Kimberly-Clark, he made good money as an engineer in a corporation, but was never be happy. Once he got laid off, he knew his calling was to continue to build organs for churches. My old friend knows his calling and is very happy for his life.

The dharma teachers in our Sangha ask us to be joyful even at unlikely circumstances. Many studies have shown that if we know why we are here and know why we are given this life to experience our impermanent body, and emotions, we can be joyful at most of the circumstances.

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***YouTube Stories, researched, created and narrated by Franklin Chen***

Hiroshima, is a history account on the decision of dropping the atomic bomb to Japan and the aftermath. A lesson that all humanity needs to learn about.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTqcWY1kvbg>

Sakura, is a story told through a Japanese widow who had lost her husband in the war. A story challenges about the Japanese patriotism and nationalism. But the challenge can be equally applied to all humanity.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL3zSXcG3QI>

By Franklin Chen

**Announcements**

After many years of dedicated service, Manju has chosen to take a much deserved sabbatical from his priestly duties. He will continue to be an active member of our sangha. I want to thank Manju for his leadership, service, and guidance and share the poem he shared during his parting Dharma Talk.

***When I Am Old***

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat that doesn't go, and doesn't suit me,  
And I shall spend my pension  
on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals,  
and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I am tired,  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells,  
And run my stick along the public railings,  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick the flowers in other people's gardens,  
And learn to spit.  
You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat,  
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go,  
Or only bread and pickle for a week,  
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats  
and things in boxes.  
But now we must have clothes that keep us dry,  
And pay our rent and not swear in the street,  
And set a good example for the children.  
We will have friends to dinner and read the papers.  
But maybe I ought to practise a little now?  
So people who know me  
are not too shocked and surprised,  
When suddenly I am old  
and start to wear purple!

By Jenny Joseph

**Events at ZRS**

**Oct 7-28** Session 1 Qigong and Meditation with Reishin at ZRS Sunday mornings 9-9:45 am. Contact Reishin for more information [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org) \$20 suggested donation per session

**Oct 7-Nov 25** Intermediate Yoga with Reishin at ZRS Sunday Mornings 10-11 am Contact Reishin for more information [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org). \$5 donation suggested. Please arrive 15 minutes early for first class

**Oct 13** ZRS Campfire Potluck 5:30 pm at the home of Taiso and Mitra. Please R.S.V.P Mitra at [robinaudrey19@gmail.com](mailto:robinaudrey19@gmail.com) or 920 896-2770

**Nov 3** ZRS All Sangha Meeting and Potluck Brunch after the morning service/sit about 9:30 am

**Nov 4-25** Session 2 Qigong and Meditation with Reishin at ZRS. Contact Reishin for more information [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org) \$20 suggested donation per session

**Dec 31** ZRS New Years Eve Ringing of the Bells Service and Potluck. 6:30 pm at ZRS Appleton, WI Contact Myoshin for more information [myoshin@zenriver.org](mailto:myoshin@zenriver.org)

**Mar 15** Next Newsletter submission Deadline. Please contact Myoshin for more information or email submissions to [myoshin@zenriver.org](mailto:myoshin@zenriver.org).

**Events beyond ZRS**

**Nov 9-11** Taste of Mondo Zen retreat Still Point Zen Center - led by Meru Dough Szper Roshi - Random Lake, WI, Contact Meru at [stillpointzen.com](http://stillpointzen.com)

**Dec 8-15** Hollow Bones - Rohatsu 8-day Sesshin - led by Meru Doug Szper Roshi - Green Bay, WI. Contact Kevala at [Mondozen.org](http://Mondozen.org) for more information

## **Getting Connected**

### **Connect with us Online**

<https://www.facebook.com/ZenRiverSangha/>

<https://twitter.com/ZenRiverSangha>

<https://www.meetup.com/Zen-River-Sangha/>

### **Get Involved by Joining one of our Committees**

Email [info@zenriver.org](mailto:info@zenriver.org) or reach out directly:

- ❖ Building & Grounds, Committee Head Matt Zarda
- ❖ Zendo Cleaning, Committee Head Reishin
- ❖ Zendo Opening, Committee Head Myoshin
- ❖ Newsletter, Committee Head Jian Zhi
- ❖ Library, Committee Head Taiso
- ❖ Fundraising & Community Outreach, Board of Directors

### **Supplies We could Use**

- Tea candles
- Tea (various flavors)
- Coffee
- Napkins
- Paper towel
- Toilet paper
- Creamer
- Sugar
- Environmentally friendly cleaning products
- Other items for donation, please contact Liaoran at [info@zenriver.org](mailto:info@zenriver.org)

## **Join Us**

### **Zen River Teachers**

Taiso Hannya Byran Bartow Roshi

Reishin Dai Nei Denise Leong

Manju Usra Bill Frackelton

Liaoran Bo Re Tess Grey

### **Board of Directors**

Liaoran, President

Jian Zhi, Secretary

Kai Hui, Treasurer

### **Weekly Services:**

Thursday evening 6:30-8:30 pm

Saturday morning 7:30-9:30 am

Zen River Sangha | 2989 W. Spencer St. Appleton, WI

54914 | Lincoln Parkway Mall

Contact: Zenriver.org | [info@zenriver.org](mailto:info@zenriver.org)