



**Quarterly Newsletter**  
Vol. 2 Dec., 2017

- ❖ President's Greeting
- ❖ Sharing the Dharma
- ❖ ZRS Board Updates
- ❖ Sangha in Action
- ❖ Sangha Expressions
- ❖ Events at ZRS
- ❖ Events beyond ZRS
- ❖ Getting Connected

---

**President Greeting**

*Liaoran Tess Grey, Current Board President*

Dear sangha family and friends,

The year continues to turn, and the holiday season is upon us. This means different things for different people. For some of us, the season is full of excitement and joy. For some of us, it is full of sorrow and stress. And, for most of us, it's a little of both!

I appreciate the zendo more than I can say during this season. To have a calm, welcoming, grounding retreat during a challenging time of the year is a very precious thing. I find that my attendance at services helps me to be a better friend, partner, and family member. Our practice gives us the opportunity to do just that--to practice being responsive rather than reactive and to practice dropping into meditative awareness at all times, even in moments of emotional upheaval.

During this season, I invite all of you to make the time to take advantage of the zendo's programming, to join the sangha in practice, and to find a little of your own quiet and contemplation. I also invite you to consider a year-end donation to our zendo's operation; we rely solely on donations to maintain the building and to provide our programming, and the end of the year is an excellent time to make a tax-deductible gift or pledge to Zen River.

Alternatively, consider doing your Christmas shopping and helping out the zendo at the same time by shopping through Amazon Smile, buying

Woodman's Cards for your holiday shopping, or picking up Scrip cards to many restaurants, gas stations, and businesses. For more information on any of these, or for more information about making donations, see "Effortless Donations for Zen River" in the first issue of our newsletter, or visit our website's "Support Us" page, or reach out to [treasurer@zenriver.org](mailto:treasurer@zenriver.org).

May you have a wonderful holiday season, whatever it brings and whatever you choose to celebrate. I hope to see all of you at the zendo soon!

Liaoran Tess Grey

**Sharing the Dharma**

*Taiso Hannya Byron Bartow Roshi, ZRS  
Head Priest*

**Precepts**

There has recently been some discussion of the precepts. The approach taken with the precepts is one of the remarkable Hollow Bones interpretations of the zen tradition.

- Affirm Life
- Act Generously
- Be Loving
- Manifest Truth
- Respect Clarity
- Honor Silence
- Celebrate Others
- Be Giving
- Embody Compassion

- Steward the Earth
- Manifest This Way

The traditional versions of the precepts are presented in the negative, and ours are reframed in the positive. As these are presented in the *Hollow Bones Sutra Book*, there is a sentence or two pointing toward a further understanding. As each precept is outlined, there is an effort to blend the traditional Buddhist understanding with a practical, modern and culturally relevant interpretation.

For instance, the traditional precept Ahimsa (non-harming) is reframed in the positive as *Affirm Life*. In the further development of the concept we have this: "In order to live, it is necessary for me to take life. I do so with reverence for the life taken." This draws from Native American spirituality, and realizes a practicality within our meat eating culture. The final sentence implies the Mahayana vow: "In gratitude, I do not take my own life for granted."

Broadly speaking, in our modern western culture, we are estranged from our root in nature. The precept *Steward the Earth* is unique to our Hollow Bones tradition as a corrective for the cultural alienation from nature. Nature is not seen as "other" - a target for human exploitation and dominion. Rather, we are this nature, not separate from our mother. This precept finishes with a vow: "I work toward achieving a lifestyle that gives more back to this earth than I take from it." So, the ultimately impossible, "giving more back" is a vow drawing us toward a commitment to awareness of our engagement with nature in everyday life – it is not an even-stein, 50/50 proposition, but a 100/100 or even 110/? endeavor.

As zen practitioners realize that the Buddha-way is the path for "their" practice, we celebrate entry into this stream with the jukai ceremony. The Hollow Bones interpretation and the traditional precepts are contemplated and taken as vows. The precepts are guidelines to support our practice conventionally. Yet, as with all dualistic principles, this is partial and provisional – as the ultimate realization of Buddha nature is a middle-way, beyond extremes. With the realization of Buddha nature, actualizing a marriage

of wisdom and compassion, these guidelines are unnecessary; yet, the violation of these principles is inconceivable.

### **ZRS Board Updates**

*Liaoran Tess Grey, President*

*Kai Hui Jill Buckmaster, Treasurer*

*Jian Zhi Peter Tolly, Secretary*

The Zen River Board of Directors is pleased to take this opportunity to give a short update on recent activities and current projects. We appreciate the publication of this newsletter, which is an outgrowth of our new committee structure and only possible with the volunteer work of those on the newsletter committee.

Other committees include Zendo Cleaning, Zendo Opening, and Building & Grounds. The committees would appreciate volunteer assistance, so please check out the "Committees" page on the website for more information.

### **A message from your treasurer**

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

	<b>Monthly Averages</b>		
	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Member Pledges	\$1,192	580	744
Basket Donation	\$ 163	154	315
Scrip&Misc	\$ 143	168	103
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>\$1,498</b>	<b>902</b>	<b>1,162</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(1,123)</b>	<b>(1,417)</b>	<b>(1,040)</b>
<b>Excess (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ 375</b>	<b>(515)</b>	<b>122</b>

We have mostly recovered from the 2016 deficit and our 2017 year-to-date contributions now slightly exceed our operating expenses as a result of the following:

- Monthly pledges have increased.
- Weekly basket donations have increased.
- Scrip purchases have remained steady.

- d. Non-cash contributions by sangha members have reduced out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., coffee and tea; lawn and garden supplies and equipment; and cleaning and maintenance supplies and equipment).
- e. Cleaning and some maintenance costs have been avoided through donation of labor by sangha members.

Our reserved capital fund is approximately \$17,000.

*Thank you all for stepping up!*

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

### **Sangha in Action**

#### *Activities and Opportunities at ZRS*

#### **Conscious Embodiment**

*By Reishin Denise Leong*

In our Hollow Bones Rinzai Zen Order, we have Five Practice Mirrors, sometimes called our Five Training Elements. These Five Training Element practices are our awakening, our genuine insight. They stand like mirrors, allowing us to see for ourselves how these core practices transform our lives. We achieve a personal freedom only possible with deep spiritual realization and discipline. Integrated Five Element discipline is our awakening.

One of these Five Mirrors is Conscious Embodiment, where through Qigong, Yoga (pranayama and asana), Tai Chi, dance, and other mindfully practiced physical disciplines, we investigate and become more aware of our embodiment. We locate and release the physical contractions associated with psychological tension, including tension resulting from our unconscious shadows and prior traumatic experiences. We become more sensitive, healthy, and conscious. We delight in the discovery that *Enlightenment is also visceral!*

Would you like a greater awareness and connection to your body? Would you like to become more conscious and healthy? Consider joining us for yoga and meditation on Sundays at the zendo.

#### **Gentle Beginner Class – 9:00-10:00**

*For those with no yoga experience or for those who would like a refresher on the basics*

This is an introductory class for those who have little to no experience with yoga or for experienced students who want a refresher. There will be explanations and demonstrations of basic, simple poses with an emphasis on foundation and proper alignment. You will learn how to use props (straps, blocks, blankets, bolsters) to modify the poses so that you have stability and ease in this practice. Gradually, the poses will be linked into a gentle, flowing sequence and will end with a short meditation period.

Cost: \$5.00/class

#### **Intermediate Class - 10:30-11:30**

*For those with some yoga experience*

This is a multi-style (Iyengar, Ashtanga, and Viniyoga) hatha yoga class for those who have some experience in yoga. You will be guided through basic poses with new, more challenging poses added throughout the session. Props (straps, blocks, blankets, bolsters) will be available. Through a combination of postures, breath-work, and meditation, you will learn to improve your strength, balance, and flexibility as well as to relax and center your body, mind, and spirit.

Cost: \$5.00/class

Dates and other information are on our website: <http://zenriver.org/yoga-classes>

## Sangha Expressions

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

### Three Chinese Characters or Pictographs Explain the Meaning of Zen

By Ming-Kai Franklin Chen

At the CMind Conference, one of my instructors, Dr. Steve Murphy-Shigimatsu introduced three Pictographs of Chinese origins explaining the meaning of Zen (or lack of Zen). Dr. Murphy-Shigimatsu was born of a Japanese mother and Irish-American father. He speaks fluent Japanese and English. His mother came from a samurai family with strict Bushido (samurai ethical code). Looking over his appearance, he looks like more Japanese than American. His thinking and philosophy is deep-rooted in Japanese culture.

Chinese and Japanese share the same pictographs, so when he showed these pictographs in the class, it resonated in my heart.



The first pictograph is 念. The upper part, 今, means 'present time.' The lower part, 心, means 'heart.' It includes feeling, emotion, mind, spirit, and the whole body. It implies 'Living at Present Moment.' This is exactly the basic teaching of the Buddhism about mindfulness. This is Zen.



The second pictograph is 忘. The upper part, 亡, means 'death.' The lower part, 心, means 'heart,' which includes feeling, emotion, and spirit. The Chinese meaning of this pictograph can be either 'forgetfulness,' or 'ignorance.' But what was forgotten or ignored? We forget that we are inter-beings. We forget that we are inter-connected to each other, inter-connected to Mother Earth. Such ignorance creates so much suffering for our human race and environmental degradation to the Earth. Much of today's racism, terrorism, are basically coming from this ignorance, or 忘.



The third pictograph is 忙. The left-hand part of the character, 忄, means 'the heart;' the right-hand part of the character, 亡, means 'death.' The Chinese translation for this pictograph is 'being busy.' When we are busy, or when we are preoccupied by 'something' in our mind, we will not be fully present at the moment either in a conversation, or a task.

Here are a couple anecdotes to illustrate this: Violinist Joshua Bell once played for three hours at a Washington D.C. subway but only collected \$32. Most of the visitors were small kids, and their parents rushed them through. The next evening, when he played at a concert hall of 2,000 seats, each seat sold at \$100.

And, Princeton seminary students who were given an assignment to deliver a sermon on "The Good Samaritan" did not help their classmate who was in need of help on the day of delivering the sermon.

Somehow, if we are pre-occupied with some thought, we will not enjoy the music, nor will we pay attention to help other people.

In summary, I find these three pictographs intriguing. They could serve our daily reflections on the Zen practice.

## The Apple in the Lunch Bag

By Ming-Kai Franklin Chen

*\*\*\*Here is the poem I wrote inspired by a story told at a concert/storytelling with a theme of 'Homeless Connection.' The story told the chilling fact that many homeless people do not have resources to take care of their teeth to be able to bite the apple.*

Although my heart is filled with gratitude for  
receiving a lunch bag,  
I have to give up the apple, the healthy choice;  
but eat the rest: bread, hot dogs, and cookies.  
For I have lost my teeth sometime ago, and  
Simply, I do not have strong teeth to bite the apple.

People ask, why don't I take care of my teeth?  
I say I am wandering on the street all day,  
At night, if I am lucky and find a shelter,  
I can only have few minutes to brush my teeth and  
rinse my mouth.  
I cannot afford to buy an ultrasonic toothbrush,  
besides,  
even if I had one, where do I find the  
electrical outlet?

Have you seen dentists? People asked.  
I say no. Why see the dentists? What are  
the points?  
Every treatment costs me hundreds, sometimes,  
thousands of the dollars?  
I cannot even find the next meal,  
how can I afford for dentists' cares?

I thank good-heart people to give me food,  
But please give me orange, or banana.  
For, I simply do not have teeth to bite the apple.

## Events at ZRS

**2nd and 4th Wednesdays** - 6 p.m. Men's Deeper Truth; closed meeting.

**Dec. 17** - Sunday, Zen Women's Brunch 9:00 a.m. join us for Yoga with Denise and a potluck brunch to follow at 10 a.m. right at ZRS. Contact Myoshin-Renee [myoshin@zenriver.org](mailto:myoshin@zenriver.org)

**Dec. 17, 31, Jan. 7, 21, Feb. 11, 18, 25, Mar. 4, 25 Sundays** - Fall Yoga with Denise Leong, CYT, RYT 9 a.m. Gentle Beginner Class, and 10:30 Intermediate Class, Multi-Style Hatha. Contact Denise at [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org)

**Dec. 23** - Saturday, Henna body art 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the home of Annie Quick-Laughlin. Contact Myoshin-Renee [myoshin@zenriver.org](mailto:myoshin@zenriver.org) to RSVP and receive the address.

## Events beyond ZRS

**Dec. 2-9** - 8-day Rohatsu Sesshin Led by Jun Po Rosh; Green Bay, WI. Visit <http://www.mondozen.org/> for more information.

**Dec. 10** - Sunday Mud and Water Sit 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. at 2558 Wrenwood Lane, Neenah, WI 54956 Contact Dae Do - Bob [rrkohl@yahoo.com](mailto:rrkohl@yahoo.com)

### **\*Visit our Sister Sangha - Green Tara**

Green Bay – Bay Area Yoga Center  
2020 S. Webster Avenue  
Sunday: 7:30 to 9 a.m.  
Thursday: 7:10 to 8:10 p.m.  
Saturday: 7:30 to 8:10 a.m.  
Contact John at 920-562-9727

## **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 - Manju
- ❖ Zendo Cleaning - Reishin
- ❖ Zendo Opening - Myoshin
- ❖ Newsletter - Jian Zhi
- ❖ Fundraising & Community Outreach - Liaoran

### **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)

### **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

### **Join Us**

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