



**Quarterly Newsletter**  
Vol. 1 Sept., 2017

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**President Greeting**

*Lioran Tess Grey, Current Board President*

Welcome to Zen River Sangha's inaugural newsletter! I'm pleased about this opportunity and grateful to Jian Zhi and Myoshin for coordinating this and to everyone who submitted content.

This newsletter is just one of many changes and new opportunities for the sangha. As Zen practitioners, we all know that change is constant—and we often all get mired in labeling that change as either “good” or “bad.” It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of what seems to be occurring at the zendo lately: new committees, new methods of communicating, increased transparency, building and parking lot updates, additional programming opportunities, attendees both old and new. Our energy and intention right now seems to me to be a “good” thing; I recognize this story of mine and try to take a measured and mindful approach to how I engage with our change and growth.

All of us can encourage one another to continue wrestling with discernment and balance as our sangha grows and changes. Zen River Sangha is, first and foremost, a meditation practice community. We were founded on and continue to operate on this directive: to provide a location, a form, and a supportive sangha for the fostering of meditative, compassionate awareness. Our business here is to awaken!

I want to hear from all of you when it comes to what you want to see happen at the sangha, and I want to understand what your thoughts are when it comes to questions of growth, programming, practice, and community. The Board welcomes engagement and volition and is excited to see what you have planned for Zen River's future. By working together and remaining aware of our fundamental Zen practice, I have no doubt that we will continue to serve as a vibrant and growing voice of the Dharma in the Fox Valley.

**Sharing the Dharma**

*Taiso Hannya Byron Bartow Roshi,*  
*ZRS Head Priest*

**On Refuge and the Growth of Sangha**

We have recently engaged in some discussion about our community and how we might grow and deepen. This column shares some thoughts about this.

The three refuges or jewels of Buddhism and Zen are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. These appear as three distinct entities, but it is useful to focus on the unity or interdependence of these. These jewels can be understood as three perspectives on the Buddhist way of living. In this way, these jewels are three aspects of a commitment to Buddhism as a way or basis of support. Going for refuge means to look here for guidance. These jewels are sparkling gifts...

a grace open to us if we will but choose to actualize this... to go for refuge.

What does it mean to go for refuge? We turn somewhere for meaning and guidance as we engage the experience of living. Where do we look for inspiration and support? And particularly, where do we turn when challenged? Where do we turn in the “dark night of the soul” when we face a challenge so existentially profound that our fundamental understanding of life’s “meaning” and our “personal” experience of identity is shaken? Here we face a slippery conceptual quandary. On the one hand, we appear to experience life through an idea of person and story constructed through culture, experience, and mental habits. On the other hand, Buddhism teaches that this identity is not fundamentally real. If we look carefully through our practice of meditation, it is clear that there is no real person to be found; rather, we may see an ever changing flow of experience and interpretation. Meditation is the jewel of Buddha, which in our practice is taken to refer to the realization of awakening to clear seeing, even as we understand this to be the teaching of the Buddha. Presentation of Buddhist teachings or ideas is one way of understanding Dharma, which can also be understood as Truth (literally law, but something more akin to natural law than rules and regulations).

In this way, Buddha and Dharma are interdependent aspects of going for refuge. And this is also the case for Sangha. Sangha is the place where we turn for spiritual support, companionship, and inspiration in practice together. Although some definitions of Sangha refer to monks and nuns, in common usage in the west Sangha has come to refer to the community that practices together. The broadest community of our practice-life extends, transcendent, throughout all being.

Recently, we have renewed our contemplation and discussions of just how we can grow as a community or Sangha. “Who” do we wish and choose to be? There is a perception that we may be able to further enliven our community as a basis for our support and growth and for “others” who may yet become

part of this community. There is a desire to take steps to move this Sangha in a positive direction.

Perhaps most important is sustaining our existence so that the jewel of this community remains available and viable as a refuge. The right kind of growth and change is an important element of sustaining our Sangha. Many of us are enthusiastic about increasing the scope and variety of dharma-related activities as opportunities for growth in our practice and as opportunities to invite others to practice with us. Similarly, there are opportunities for increasing social activities within our community. It is interesting to watch this unfold, and we also have the challenge to practice patience and mindfulness as we do so. As a relatively small spiritual community, we may need to be careful with our energy and not disperse and burn ourselves out by taking on too much, too fast. Perhaps existing and supporting our basic practice is the primary activity for sustaining our community as a refuge. This requires a focus on meeting our obligations for maintaining our location with its economical and maintenance needs (including cleaning, supplies, and exterior). These help to welcome us to practice and set the tone. While exciting new opportunities loom, these seemingly more mundane activities are essential to practice, as these are practice opportunities to chop wood and carry water... or to use a more contemporary phrase, stick to the knitting. Although we appear to be succeeding in these rather basic dimensions, we are just “getting by” not exceeding minimal needs.

Not only are these fundamental opportunities for the realization of refuge in Sangha, but to move into other arenas too quickly is to risk dissipation and burnout, and because our community is presently small, that could be disastrous for us. At our stage especially, we must be prudent and practice patience and balance. This is not to say that we cannot try new things and grow, just that we need to temper our appetite.

A word about social action: many of us are significantly engaged in a variety of social action, and this can be an actualization of the fundamental Bodhisattva vow: “However innumerable all beings

are, I vow to serve and liberate them all.” Many of us have been members of larger spiritual groups with significant and varied social action activities, and these have been vehicles for manifesting the action implied by our vow. Can’t we as a Sangha take on a social project or social projects like this? We may not be ready for such endeavors for two reasons. The first has to do with the more basic challenge of our sustainability as suggested above. The second has to do with our size and the difficulty we would have in finding a project all comers would choose to support. Not only is there the risk of collective burnout, but we also risk squabbling about what project to choose. We don’t want to alienate people who might otherwise practice with us, as our projects present philosophical or political positions with which some are uncomfortable or even opposed. Larger groups can support and sustain a variety of projects, which helps with the concern of alienating people. At our present stage, we may be wiser to encourage those who are ready and inspired for social action to avail themselves of the many other opportunities that exist. If appropriate, the Sangha can be identified in these efforts as we affirm membership in Zen River.

Finally, as we are embarking on the adventure of a quarterly publication, for which I hope to continue to provide a column, please share your feedback and suggestions for topics. I would like to offer something you may find useful.

Blessings,  
taiso

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*Reishin Denise Leong, ZRS Priest*

**Mondo Zen:  
Your Angst can Become your Liberation!**

*Have you suffered enough?  
Are you finally willing to change your mind?*

There is a huge amount of unnecessary suffering in the world—unnecessary because it does not arise directly from our life circumstances, but from the

conditioned way in which we react to our own memories, stories, and beliefs. From the ego’s perspective, emotions such as anger, shame, depression, and anxiety appear to be involuntary and automatic. We seem to be “at the mercy” of these emotions. But, in fact, they are not just emotions but reactive forms of violence, directed against self and others. Because of our ego confusion, we waste tremendous amounts of time and energy in self-defeating emotional patterns.

*In order to alleviate this suffering, we need deeper insight into and understanding of our minds. We need to access our deeper feelings and understand the information contained within our deeper feelings. We need to see through our ego and experience our true nature.*

*~ from the Mondo Zen Training Manual*

Mondo Zen, a koan process created by our Abbot, Jun Po Denis Kelly, is based on traditional Chinese and Japanese Zen, updated for the 21st century. The word “Mondo” means “The Way of Dialog”; “Zen” translates as *Clear Deep Heart Mind*—a knowing of our consciousness deeper than our thinking, feeling, and sensing mind; “koans” are enigmatic questions designed to bring your rational thinking mind to a one-point focus. The Mondo Zen Koan Process refers to a dialog process that uses enigmatic questions to awaken you to your true nature, your *Clear Deep Heart Mind*, as well as unconditional compassion.

Experience Mondo Zen for yourself. Learn how you can transform habitual, negative emotional reactions into wise, compassionate responses and alleviate suffering. Contact any ZRS priest for more information.

### **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.

The committees are just one of the methods we are using to foster improved communication among sangha members. We’ve also recently redesigned and expanded our website. You’ll be able to find more information and updates there than have historically been available, as well as easier ways to contact the Board of Directors or to access our most recent financial statements and events/programming calendar. The website is also the place to go to find copies of our up to date policy documents on ethics, grievances, and general administration. There is also a new communications center at the zendo, consisting of a bulletin board and paper copies of our most recent newsletters, financials, and more.

Having addressed some of the pent up administrative and communication-related demands at the zendo, the Board will be returning our focus to the financial health and sustainability of our sangha. The excellent news is that, since our renewed attempts to raise awareness of the issue of our operating budget falling short, we have seen a modest increase in ad hoc donations. The Board hopes that by expanding this awareness into an upcoming fundraising campaign, we will be able to encourage additional recurring pledges and potentially innovate additional funding sources. Recurring monthly pledges are the best way for our sangha to be able to plan ahead and steward our resources appropriately, so please consider setting this convenient process up if you have not already, either by contacting the Treasurer or using the website “Support Us” resources.

Lastly, the Board, in conjunction with the priests, is exploring options for expanded programming at the zendo. If you wish to suggest or coordinate a programming offering, please fill out a Board Agenda

Topic Request form either online or in person at the zendo near the Communication Board.

### **Sangha in Action**

#### *Activities and Opportunities at ZRS*

### **Effortless Donations for Zen River (easy as ABC!)**

By Reishin Denise Leong

#### **A. Smile Amazon**

Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Zen River. Go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), log in to your account, and choose **Friends of Zen OSHKOSH (NOT APPLETON)** as your charity. From then on, just remember to go to Smile Amazon when making purchases—the donations are automatic!

**B. Woodman’s Gift Cards** - Woodman’s donates 5% of the gift card amount to Zen River. To purchase \$50 or \$100 gift cards, good at any Woodman’s, see Kai Hui Jill Buckmaster.

**C. Scrip** - Purchase gift cards from hundreds of stores and services through the Scrip program. These companies donate a percentage of the gift card amount to Zen River. You can check out the offerings at [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) and order your gift cards in one of two ways:

1. Fill out a form and give to Reishin with cash/check payment
2. Or, you can create an account online at [www.shopwithscrip.com](http://www.shopwithscrip.com) and enroll in the Zen River Sangha Program to order online:
  - Click **Get Started**
  - Click **Join Your Existing Program**
  - **Enrollment Code:** C427F54542779

To pay for purchases through your account...

1. Simply log into your ShopWithScrip® account and click on the PrestoPay link under Family Functions on your Dashboard.
2. Enter your checking account information.
3. Complete the steps to verify your information, and you will receive a secure approval code.

4. That's it! You will then be able to choose the PrestoPay option when you check out.
5. A small \$0.15 convenience fee will apply to each order.

*Gift cards can be picked up at the zendo 7-10 days after you order. If you have questions, please contact Reishin.*

### **Sangha Expressions**

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

#### **Walk after Storm**

By Jian Zhi Peter Tolly

Drops of rain like a dishcloth raised  
away from the sink—

a dragonfly face down in the driveway.  
It was the flagpole's clang

that stopped me in the corner of that yard  
where leaves rustled up

like electric tendrils. Awareness—  
a charge in the mind

pulled to a point like filings to a node.  
The uncanny hums

like the dead-last buzz of filament wings  
as I turned the insect over.

#### ***Seeking Transformation and Wholeness***

By Nalu Donna Janus

Although my life is deeply satisfying these days, which I attribute to years of practicing Zen meditation, and Mondo Zen, (Michael, my husband takes credit for some of this, as well) there are times when I forget. A more recent practice, called Wholebody Focusing (WBF)<sup>1</sup> has brought longer periods of sensing the wholeness of life. WBF is an outgrowth of the 'Focusing'<sup>2</sup> process discovered by Gene Gendlin while he was doing research at the University of Chicago—a process, which he then developed to teach others.

Focusing is a gentle process of inner sensing, as a way to move forward from stuck places, or creative

blocks. It is now taught and practiced all over the world. The word focusing is used here in the sense of focusing a camera lens till what is out of focus becomes clear. I learned Focusing in the 1980's and have practiced it since. I also taught it for over a 5-year period. WBF deepens and expands the Focusing process. It is based on quantum mechanics and Gene Gendlin's Philosophy of the implicit.<sup>3</sup>

Here's what Glenn Fleisch, whom I learned WBF from, has to say about it:

*Without needing to ask ourselves what consciousness is or is not, as Focusers we know that new life possibilities emerge from choosing to notice our direct experience in a bodily way. Consciousness (awareness) brings with it more consciousness (awareness). If we take this a little further and invite an awareness of a wholebody-environment-interaction with WBF, we also feel ourselves to be more alive, integrated, and more connected to a sense of self, other, and the environment. Could it be that consciousness underlies everything in the universe? Is this why everything seems to be affected by consciousness, at least in the quantum mechanical world view? If consciousness were a quantum mechanical version of God, then consciousness needs me, a conscious human being, to participate with it (to observe it) for it to function in the way nature intended. This view corresponds to the widely accepted Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics... the most precise description of the physical world to date.<sup>4</sup>*

Practicing WBF has brought me a kind of completion—although I have practiced and even taught many forms of bodily awareness and studied body-centered psychotherapy, it always felt like something was missing. WBF offers a way of relating skillfully to the body, mind, and environment. "We have total trust in the Body Wisdom (Innate Intelligence) to naturally and effortlessly bring forward that which needs attention."<sup>4</sup> This brings a more expanded embodied presence.

In this moment, as I take the time to reflect, tears of gratitude fall out of my eyes. WBF has gently encouraged me into a deeper experiencing of the boundlessness of conscious being—in a body, alive in interaction with others, the world, the universe.

When I shared this with Michael, he said, "Your words are too pretty. How has it impacted your relationship with your husband and your dog?" My

answer: on a practical level, I am aware that the container of my experience is much bigger than I have known, and I am able to maintain this awareness for longer and longer periods. Thus, what arises in my experience has less impact, giving me more space between stimulus and reaction and more 'time' to be able to choose a wise response—which of course, is what happens over time, in meditation and through Mondo Zen. One difference is, once the step-by-step process of attunements is learned, people can form WBF partnerships and practice together on a regular basis. This creates an ongoing sense of communion where two or more people share a field of awakened presence, deepening connection with each other and the world. The burdens in life become smaller and life becomes more expansive. After practicing for a couple of months, my life (in general) feels smoother.

More specifically, one session of WBF where Glenn led me through the process has helped me to almost completely remove the anxiety connected to flying. And, this past June I put it to the test. As I walked through the airport, I began to feel the usual anxiety. This was my cue to remember to become aware of my whole body and the present-moment environment which was safe and to hold both in awareness at the same time. So, the container became bigger and my anxiety much smaller. I had the thought, "I'll just put the anxiety in my pocket for now and take it out if I need it." And, what a pleasant round trip it became!

Secondly, though I continue to have a WBF partner who lives in France (we Skype weekly), I would love to offer to anyone in our sangha an opportunity to practice WBF. I would guide you in a session or sessions till you have a grasp of the process. I have a vision of a community where our conversations can become even more intentionally heartfelt.

Finally, how can WBF affect your life? First, WBF produces clarity about the next step in changing an unwanted habit or moving through stuck places, be they emotional, mental, or creative. Second, many people have used it successfully to relieve the tension of stress, heal chronic pain and/or illness. "Grounding in the safety of our 'wholebody' in the present moment, allows the body to continue to unfold and unwind itself in whatever ways it needs for its own healing and resolution."<sup>1</sup> I personally have renewed hope that it's possible to heal the

chronic pain I experience due to the Hashimoto's Thyroiditis that I have endured for over 20 years.

*How we observe the body, mind, and its various manifestations has a direct effect upon them. Over 40 years of Focusing practices throughout the world provide ample experiential evidence of this fact. A certain kind of human consciousness changes the living body and its situation, activating the implicit energy and knowing of any part to open to its own healing direction.<sup>4</sup>*

If you have questions or are ready for the next step contact me at [donna2646@gmail.com](mailto:donna2646@gmail.com).

#### References:

1. "Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy: Four avenues of Wholebody felt sensing for Transforming Symptoms of Trauma" by Glenn Fleisch, Ph.D. & Karen Whalen, Ph.D. (2010)  
<http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/wholebodyFOT.pdf>
2. The International Focusing Institute,  
<http://www.focusing.org/>
3. "The Philosophy of the Implicit An Introduction to the Work of Gene Gendlin" by Robert Parker, Ph.D.,  
<http://www.lifeforward.org/id2.html>
4. "Quantum Consciousness: An Explanatory Model for Life Forward Movement in Wholebody Focusing, Part 1 and Part 2" by Karen Whalen, Ph.D. and Glenn Fleisch, Ph.D.  
[http://www.focusing.org/folio/Vol23No12012/07\\_WHalena\\_FocusingResearch\\_rev.pdf](http://www.focusing.org/folio/Vol23No12012/07_WHalena_FocusingResearch_rev.pdf)

### **Several Sincere "Thank You's" from Building & Grounds By Manju Bill Frackelton**

- ❖ To Nalu & Myoshin for maintaining our garden in front and transplanting hostas in back over the summer.
- ❖ To our landlord, Reishin for the parking lot repair & asphalt sealing in front, as well as taking care of other smaller but important building problems.
- ❖ To John, Liz, & Joel for helping with grounds and gutter cleaning work.
- ❖ To the ZRS board for letting me experiment with using donated soil to fill low spots in our back yard.

## **Events at ZRS**

**Sept. 3** - Milwaukee Zen Center road trip. Guest speaker Steve Weintraub. 10:15 a.m. Contact Manju [manju@zenriver.org](mailto:manju@zenriver.org).

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

**Sept. thru Oct. 19** - Thursday night Yoga starting at 5:15 p.m. No experience or equipment needed. No Yoga Oct. 5 and 12. Future dates TBD. Contact Reishin [reishin@zenriver.org](mailto:reishin@zenriver.org).

## **Events beyond ZRS**

**Sept. 8-10** - Green Tara Sangha Weekend Meditation Retreat St. Norbert Spirituality and Retreat Center, De Pere, WI. Cost \$175, meals included. Contact Roshi Vimala Muni, John Nemick at 920-562-9727 or [jnemick@new.rr.com](mailto:jnemick@new.rr.com).

**Sept. 18** - *Come Walk With Me - A Journey into Mindfulness featuring Thich Nhat Hann*, Valley Grand Cinema, Appleton, 7:30 p.m., \$10. Reserve your tickets now at <http://gathr.us/s/20663>

**Hollow Bones Events** <http://www.mondozen.org/>

**Sept. 25-Oct. 1** - Seven-day Sesshin led by Doshin Roshi; Netherlands.

**Sept. 28-Oct. 1** - Zen with Len Unreasonable Enjoyment Retreat led by Rev. Kensho Silverston; Colorado.

**Oct. 7-14** - Mondo Zen Sesshin led by Jun Po Roshi; Dai Bosatsu Zendo, NY.

**Nov. 16-19** - 3-Day Mondo Zen Retreat; Seaback, WA.

**Dec. 2-9** - 8-day Rohatsu Sesshin Led by Jun Po Roshi; Green Bay, WI.

## **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)