

INTRODUCTION 080808

ESTABLISHMENT OF A STANDARD PRACTICE PATH

Abbot's Transmission This document is a summary response to the request of senior students, made to the abbot of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center (ASZC) some five years ago, to pursue rapprochement with the larger community of Zen centers in the USA.

Establishment of a formal practice path for members of the Silent Thunder Order (STO) is the culmination of a program of following training stages aligned with those of the Soto Shu. This was undertaken by the abbot as a result of this request, toward recognition as a fully ordained and transmitted Zen priest. This was done with the financial support of ASZC affiliates, and the kind tutelage of Shohaku Okumura, Roshi and Barbara Seirin Kohn, Sensei, of the Kodo Uchiyama, Roshi and Shunryu Suzuki, Roshi lineages, respectively.

The process took place over the better part of two years, and took into account the abbot's years of training with Matsuoka Roshi (such a program would normally require a minimum of ten years). Transmission in the Uchiyama lineage, through Okumura Roshi, does not cut off the Matsuoka lineage; STO students will be eligible for formal transmission in our Founder's line.

Matsuoka Lineage Matsuoka Roshi used the term "disciple" for his students, once they had made a serious commitment to practice. He laid out a simple, three-step outline of training stages at the abbot's request, after the incorporation of ASZC. The first is "Serious Zen Student," one who undergoes Initiation, then "Discipleship," followed by "Zen Teacher" or "Zen Priest." Up until the present, there was little need to go beyond the parameters that Matsuoka Roshi defined. With the advent of a larger practice community, when many other lineages and their followers have arisen in the USA, it is incumbent upon the members of STO to ensure that its lineage is not questioned as to authenticity.

The formal process that STO is adopting will align its stages of training more closely with those that are standard for other American Zen centers. As a consequence, the Matsuoka lineage should now be recognized as legitimate, and its disciples — students and teachers — accepted without question, by the larger Zen community. Within its family, STO is free to maintain traditions that are

somewhat different from other lineages, and of course exercises total discretion as to how it organize its program, faculty and staff, and the administration of its affiliate network.

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Unintended Consequences There are unintended consequences of any action taken in the context of a group of people. The implementation of any structure maybe misconstrued as divisive to the sangha, e. g. by differentiating stages of training. This is a natural human tendency that all are encouraged to resist. The intent is just the opposite — to foster harmony in the sangha through greater clarity of practice path, and a more consistent approach to the ritual and protocol that we practice.

Ritual and protocol are central to the cohesion of any group. The changes that the sangha has witnessed, and that its disciples are learning, are relatively trivial, and designed to bring STO's public service into greater conformity with the familiar standards of other centers. From anecdotal evidence as reported by visitors from other sanghas, it appears to be working. Those who have felt resistance to the changes are asked to practice patience.

Not for Everyone Zen is for everyone, as Sensei often said. But formal recognition may not be. Offering a path to formal recognition is not the same as suggesting that anyone should pursue it. How one actualizes the Zen life is a personal matter. One's practice is not made more genuine by the trappings of formality. The establishment of genuine Zen practice should be the personal goal of the individual member, and supporting that effort is the central objective of a Zen community.

Students and practitioners of STO network may not wish to pursue a formal path to become either lay teacher or priest. The program offered by STO is directed primarily to lay practice, as our Founder believed this to be the future of Zen in America. All members of the STO sangha are presently engaged in living lives of family, career, and social engagement.

Credentials vs Status As Matsuoka Roshi once said, we live in a credentialed society; without credentials, no one will listen. The abbot agreed to become his disciple, understanding that this was to enable one to train others in Zen, particularly Zen meditation. However, this aspect of the practice path is secondary to personal practice on the cushion, and that is the way everyone should regard it.

Those who make the commitment to formal training do so in order to serve the sangha. Those who pursue more formal stages of training take on greater responsibility — not to be confused with greater status — within the sangha.

As Master Rinzai is said to have taught, “Above this mass of reddish flesh, there resides a true person of no stature, constantly coming and going through the six portals.” Please do not “mix up Zen” (a Matsuoka-ism) with ideas of stature.

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PRACTICE PATH for ZEN TEACHER or PRIEST

Stages of Training The stages of training available through STO begin with training as a Newcomer, and the option of becoming an Initiate. Initiation (Jap. Jukai), is open to anyone who is sincerely interested in practicing Zen. This is a personal choice, not a formal stage of training, but is considered a prerequisite for undertaking either lay ordination (Jap. Zaike Tokudo), or priest ordination (Jap. Shukke Tokudo). Vestment (wagesa).

Two-Track The STO will recognize two highest levels of training and recognition, that of Zen Lay Teacher and that of Zen Priest. These two options allow individual candidates to assess which path fits their personality and lifestyle needs most appropriately. A person who completes the prerequisites for the former may, at a later time in life, opt to pursue the completion of the latter. This will vary on a case-by-case basis, of course. The details of practice path requirements are presented in outline form elsewhere. Here, an overview of the differences is offered to relieve any confusion.

Broadly, the practice paths are very similar. particularly in the beginning phases. The requirements for a Transmitted Zen Priest have a longer term, and are somewhat more stringent, than those for a Certified Zen Lay Teacher. The latter is more oriented to the scholarly mindset, the former to teaching by example. The main operational difference upon completion of the program is that, while both are authorized to certify lay teachers, only a transmitted priest is authorized to transmit others.

Consequently, training in the three bases: Buddha-zazen, Dharma-study, and Sangha- service; has a slightly different emphasis for a priest than for a teacher. Both are expected to be deeply devoted to zazen. A teacher should excel in dharma study and exposition, and need not offer sangha services beyond

leading zazen. A priest should be dedicated to sangha service, and need not be as strong in intellectual dharma exposition.

Zen Lay Teacher Certification STO is a lay practice lineage, and honors that legacy by establishing a Lay Teacher certification, credentialing those who choose this path for teaching Zen Buddhism, and authorizing them to perform such ceremonies for others. In this way, STO fosters robust practice for the layperson who maintains a household and other social obligations.

Zen Priest Transmission With the mainstreaming of Zen in America, and the formal recognition of STO's founder, offering full transmission as a Zen Priest has become possible, if not a necessity, credentialing those who choose this path for living the example of Zen Buddhism, and enhancing Zen training by authorizing others. In this way, STO opens wide the gate for those who are willing and able to commit to a deep level of service to the Zen community.

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Tripartite Path In undertaking either training path, one must participate in all three areas of training, which we organize under the Three Treasure headings of "Buddha, Dharma and Sangha":

BUDDHA Buddha practice is participation in the tradition of Zen meditation, or zazen. Prerequisites are defined as time on the cushion. This is the central and most important qualifying activity on the curriculum of the STO.

DHARMA Dharma practice comprises Ancestor study, including the written record as well as live review and participatory engagement in the teachings of contemporary mentors. It is secondary to zazen, but not separate; through buddha practice one understands dharma, and through dharma study one understands buddha practice.

SANGHA Sangha practice encompasses the many traditional forms of service to the Zen community, such as opening and closing the zendo; participating in and conducting formal services for the community; giving zazen instruction and dharma talks; maintaining the program and facility; and otherwise enhancing the Zen practice of others through skillful means. This also sometimes requires going beyond the traditional, and extends to the larger community of which the Zen sangha is a part.

The three dimensions of the practice path outlined above are not separable from one's personal path, but each individual will have a unique relationship to the three. Therefore it is meaningful to posit a fourth dimension, the "person," in synergetic relationship to the other three.

PERSONAL Personal practice includes all the dimensions of the Zen life that take place off the cushion and away from the Zen center and sangha, such as right conduct: speech, action and livelihood; the dharma of family life; secular teaching, and service to the larger cultural community.

The unique characteristics of one's personal life will play a central role in determining one's proclivity for the particular practice path followed, and the appropriateness of the level of practice to which one might aspire. These conditions change over time, with time of life changes, health and other issues, and lifestyle choices. The minimum annual Practice Discussion is intended to allow for adjustments and adaptations to conditions, in consultation with one's teacher, as one proceeds along a practice path, or shifts direction.

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Buddha Practice: Zazen As all dimensions of Zen practice are brought into focus on the cushion, the most important prerequisite in the Matsuoka lineage, for either lay practice or priest training, is one's devotion to the practice of zazen. Following an analysis of what our program currently makes available, there are approximately 1,000 hours per year of zazen time. This does not take into consideration affiliate sesshin and zazenkai. Full credit is given for time practiced with our extended dharma family at Sanshinji and Austin Zen Center, or their affiliates.

Dharma Practice: Study Ancestor study is one of two tracks that Master Dogen posited as necessary for complete training, the other being zazen or shikantaza. He said that they are like two stones that should be rubbed together, one in each hand, until there is no gap between them. The problem with study is that there is so much available in the written record, it is difficult to narrow it down to essentials.

In the Matsuoka lineage, certain teachings are considered more central than others, particularly those that deal directly with zazen. Teachings of Soto lineage teachers, beginning with Matsuoka-roshi's written record, as well as those of his

contemporaries, and from there back to Tozan, the founder of Soto Zen in China, are the logical place to begin. Then one should trace back through pre-Soto Ancestors in China, and finally selected precursors in India, culminating with the Sutras of Shakyamuni Buddha, representing a full range of the breadth and depth of dharma.

Teachers and teachings of other Zen traditions (e.g. Rinzai) and countries of origin (e.g. Korea), and other Buddhist sects (e.g. Theravadin) may be studied for “extra credit” but will not be considered essential, or a substitution for Soto texts.

Comprehension is a difficult thing to measure. The vehicle for expressing it is through Dharma talks and participation in Hossen and Dokusan, or written discourse, as well as informal discussions with your teacher.

A bibliography recommended for study is attached as an appendix, listing basic teachings with which both the Lay Teacher or Zen Priest should be familiar. They should be able to discuss these intelligently, clarifying misconceptions that a student may bring up. The list is necessarily incomplete, in the sense of representing a comprehensive bibliography of all essential teachings. New translations are coming available at a rate that makes it difficult to keep the list current.

Sangha Practice: Service Service to the community is perhaps the most important dimension for those who join a sangha dedicated to the Zen Buddhist view and way of life. But without Dharma study and especially sitting zazen, it can become a hindrance to real progress in one’s training.

Sangha practice is at once the most rewarding or pleasant, yet the most entangling and complicated, dimension of Zen training. It is much different seen from the perspective of long practice of zazen and dharma study than it seems in the beginning of one’s practice. It is important to learn how to welcome and treat members and the public, from the perspective of a newcomer when one has taken the position of a disciple in service to the community.

In defining prerequisites for service to the community, the intangible dimensions of

attitude, demeanor, and communication skills are difficult to specify. It will have to suffice to list the kinds of protocols and areas of service that are expected, and leave the interpersonal to the discretion of the teacher.

Personal Practice: Daily Life Daily life includes many choices that are seemingly unrelated to one's position and practice in the world of Zen Buddhism. But the last of the Ten Grave Precepts, not to defame the Three Treasures, puts a special burden on the Zen Priest to attempt to avoid even the appearance of impropriety that might reflect poorly on another's perception of Zen. As Matsuoka-Roshi used to say, "keep an eye on that one little thing that you allow yourself."

Zen is not a moralistic path, but as transmitted Priests and Lay Zen Teachers, we have an obligation to behave in such a way as to not prejudice the public attitude toward Zen, in order that they may approach it with an open mind.

Any aspect of dimension of one's daily life that one feels may be regarded as prejudicial or inappropriate in this context should be considered carefully. If one is unable to resolve such a dilemma on one's own, one should take it up with the teacher.

The Precepts basically outline those activities and proclivities that would be ill-advised to pursue, and the Paramitas make clear the areas that one should strive to perfect. Along with the Eightfold Path, these Buddhist principles outline a fairly comprehensive lifestyle that is difficult to improve upon, much less discount.

Generally, meditation practice and its hoped-for wisdom is considered a kind of process of maturing within a developmental model. Zen allows for great exceptions to the rule, noting anomalies such as Hui-neng, or the 7-year-old female dharma holder that Master Dogen refers to in the Shobogenzo Raihai Tokuzui, as well as (in)famous renegade Zen masters and poets. However, for most, merit accumulated from past lives is insufficient to bring about a sudden ripening of practice. One must do the work and gradually come to the kind of view and thought that approximate Buddha's wisdom.

We work together in a teacher-student relationship, one that allows for due consideration of our faults and foibles as part of the learning process. One is enabled to fail in life so that one may succeed in the apprehension of dharma. This, however, does not involve repentance, forgiveness and redemption in the Western religious sense, but a clear recognition of the limits of our ability to overcome karmic consciousness. It is tenacious and pernicious, and requires a great deal of effort.

If one persists in, or insists upon, behavior and views that are at variance with one's teacher, there is no reason to continue the relationship. Any kind of lifestyle or behavior that is contradictory to the role of Zen Priest, in the view of one's teacher, will be cause for modification, or for termination of the training

relationship.

Specifics regarding conduct: lifestyle, livelihood, and speech and action outside the domain of the Zen center itself will be taken up on a case-by-case basis. It is expected that amongst those aspiring to Zen Priesthood, conflicts will be few and far between.

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OUTLINE OF TRAINING STAGES

MINIMUM PROGRAM TERM: Novice/Certified Teacher — 8 Years
Ordained Priest — 9 Years Transmitted Priest — 11 Years

[Requirements need not be completed in this exact sequence; any completed earlier in the Practice Path may be carried forward, credited to the stage in which they are listed.]

1. DISCIPLE Minimum Term: 4 Years

Prerequisite: Initiation 5 Precepts [*Jukai*]

Vestment: *Wagesa*, *Juzu* Certificate: Paper

Annual Program Requirements Term Totals Buddha: Week Long Retreat [*Sesshin*] (1) = (004) (Self-understanding) Weekend Retreat [*Zazenka*] (3) = (012) Daily Session (20 – Inclusive of above = (080)

Dharma: Japanese / American, Chinese Soto Lineage Bibliography (Academic Study) Private Dialog [*Dokusan*] (12) = (048) Public Dialog [*Hossen*] (2) = (008) Assist: Dharma Talk (1) = (004)

Sangha: Practice Discussion (1) = (004) (Priestcraft & Assist: Service (1) = (004) Personal Conduct) Assist: Newcomer Instruction (2 per Term) = (002) Lead: Newcomer Instruction (1) = (004) Assist: Initiation Ceremony (2 per Term) = (002) Ceremony: Lay Ordination [*Zaike Tokudo*] 10 Precepts [*Jukai*] Vestment: *Rakusu*

TITLE: Lay Ordained Student [Disciple]

Authorization: • Mentor: - Initiate(s)

• Assist: - Service

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Initiation

• Lead: - Informal *Zazen* Session

- Newcomer

Instruction - *Samu* &

Soji

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2. NOVICE Minimum Term: 4 Years

Prerequisite: Lay Ordination [*Zaike Tokudo*]

Annual Program Requirements Term Totals Buddha: Week Long Retreat
[*Sesshin*] (2) = (008) Weekend Retreat [*Zazenkaï*] (4) = (016) Daily
Session [*Zazen*] (30 – Inclusive) = (120)

Dharma: Indo-Chinese Pre-Soto Lineage Bibliography

Private Dialog [*Dokusan*] (12) = (048) Public Dialog [*Hossen*] (2) = (008)

Practice: Informal Dharma Talk (2) = (008) Thesis: Engaged Zen Project

Sangha: Mentor: Initiate(s)

Assist: *Zaike Tokudo* (2 per Term) = (002) Practice Teaching (Including 6
as *Shuso*) = (012) Sewing: *Kesa*, *Zagu*, Envelope Practice Discussion (1)
= (004) Newcomer Instruction (1) = (004) Ceremony: Priest Ordination
[*Shukke Tokudo*]

Certification [*Gago* –Second Name]

Vestment: 7-Jo Robe [*Okesa*- Black]

TITLE: Novice Priest; Lay Teacher

Authorization: • Mentor: - Disciple in Training

• Assist: - Service (*Ino*, *Doan*, *Fukudo*, *Jikka*,
Doshi) - Lay Ordination [*Zaike Tokudo*]

• Offer: - Informal Dharma Dialog

- Lead: - Formal *Zazen* Session

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3. HEAD STUDENT (*Shuso*) Minimum Term: 1 Year

Prerequisite: Priest Ordination [*Shukke Tokudo*]

12-Week Practice Period [*Anjo*] as *Shuso* = (001) Ceremony:

Head Student [*Shuso*] Exam [*Hossen*] Vestment: Fan

TITLE: Ordained Priest; Certified lay Teacher

Authorization: • Mentor: - Novice in Training

- Assist: - Public Service (Holiday, Memorial, etc.)
 - Priest Ordination [*Shukke Tokudo*]
- Offer: - Formal Talk
 - Practice Discussion
- Lead: - Day Sit [*Zazenkaï*]
 - Short Retreat [*Sesshin*]
- Conduct: - Initiation (*Zaike Tokudo*)
- Publish: - Engaged Project
- Join: - SZBA; AZTA; Associate Member

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4. TRANSMITTED PRIEST Minimum Term: 2 Year

Prerequisite: Head Student [*Shuso*]

Annual Program Requirements Term Totals Buddha: 12-Week Practice Period [*Anjo* as Lead] = (001) Week Long Retreat [*Sesshin*] (2 – Inclusive) = (004) Weekend Retreat [*Zazenkaï*] (4 - Inclusive) = (008) Daily Session [*Zazen*] (30 – Inclusive) = (060)

Dharma: Lead Teaching (Including 12 in *Ango*) = (012) Private Dialog
[*Dokusan*] (12) = (024) Public Dialog [*Hossen*] (2) = (004)

Sangha: Mentor Novice(s) in Training

Assist: *Shukke Tokudo* (1 per Term) = (001) Practice Discussion (1) =
(002) Newcomer Instruction (1) = (002) Ceremonies: Transmission [*Shiho*]

Vestment: 7-Jo Robe [*Okesa* - Brown] Degree: Transmitted Zen Priest

Certificate: Silk Transmission Documents [*Ketchimyaku etc*]

TITLE: Transmitted Priest

Authorization: • Mentor: - Ordained Priests

- Certified

Teachers

• Assist - Inter-Lineage Conferences, Outreach

• Offer: - *Dokusan*

- Formal Public Dharma Talk (9-jo

Okesa) - *Teisho*

• Lead: - Long Retreat (*Rohatsu*)

-

Ango

• Conduct: - Discipleship

- *Shuso* - Lay Teacher

Certification -

Transmission

• Join: - SZBA; AZTA Full Member

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BUDDHA

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•

Livelihood

• *Zazenkai* &

Sesshin

•

Travel

• *Daily/Weekly*

Zazen

STO TRAINING INTERFACE

1.

PERSONAL

- Hobby
- Affiliate Retreats

- Habits
- Home Practice

- Education

- Lifestyle

- Study
- Newcomer Instruct'n

- Discussion
- Service Protocols

- Teaching

- Ceremonies

- Writing
- Special Occasions

3. DHARMA

4. SANGHA

- Zazenkai & Sesshin
- Zazenkai & Sesshin

Synergistic Aspiration

Personal Life to Practice Area: 1 — 2 Organize life to devote more time to Buddha zazen 2 — 1 See lifestyle clearly through mirror of Zen in zazen 1 — 3 Study Dharma record instead of other unnecessary reading 3 — 1 Examine daily life in light of Dharma principles 1 — 4 Develop service relationship to other members of Sangha 4 — 1 Welcome social relations with dharma family

Practice Area Cross-Training: 2 — 3 Integrate Buddha zazen with Dharma study 3 — 2 Deepen Dharma understanding through Buddha zazen 2 — 4 Bring Buddha zazen to bear on Sangha relations 4 — 2 Invite Sangha to

*practice Buddha zazen with you 3 — 4 Share Dharma
understanding with Sangha 4 — 3 Encourage Sangha
immersion in Dharma*

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APPENDIX I: Initiate Guidelines (Inserted in Certificate)

Congratulations! As an initiate of Buddhism, you have declared your vows to follow the way of Buddha, and to do your best to live up to five of the grave precepts of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is natural that you should wonder what this means in terms of your relationship to Zen Buddhism, and particularly the sangha and leadership of the ASZC.

Basically, Zaike Tokudo means your receiving of the precepts, and a declaration of your embrace of buddhadharma. This would be true if you were never to set foot in the ASZC again, and never have any contact with its sangha.

However, for most Initiates, participation in the activities of ASZC and interaction with the members of its sangha are the practical result of undergoing Tokudo. So it is necessary that you understand what you may expect from ASZC and what the leadership of ASZC expects from you.

As an Initiate, you are invited to choose a senior teacher as individual Mentor, for at least the first year following your initiation. You are encouraged to choose one of the senior teachers with whom you feel an affinity, or with whom it is most natural for you to associate.

You should expect that your Mentor be available to you on a regular or emergency basis, and that they will do all in their power to foster your practice of Zen and an understanding of buddhadharma.

You are expected to be proactive in this mentoring relationship, attending when your assigned teacher is lead or Doshi, and in all practicable ways supporting and participating in her /his activities. This in no way is intended to preempt your relations with other senior teachers at ASZC.

You are encouraged to attend at least one weekend zazenkai each year, especially when your Mentor is Doshi. You are also encouraged to attend a week-long sesshin.

In addition to the practice relationship, you are invited to participate at a deeper

level in the activities of ASZC. The opportunities for involvement include:

- Personal assistance to teachers
- Staffing ASZC events
- Accompanying teachers on outreach
- Housework chores at ASZC
- Inviting friends to ASZC
- Suggestions for program improvements
- Cooking for sesshin and weekly schedule

You are expected to support ASZC financially to the degree that you can afford. The most important contribution you make to ASZC is your presence and harmonious camaraderie with the sangha.

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APPENDIX II: Disciple Guidelines (Inserted in Certificate)

Congratulations! As a new Disciple in Zen Buddhism, you have declared your vows to follow the way of Buddha, and to do your best to live up to the three Pure Precepts and the ten Grave Precepts of buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is natural that you should wonder what this means in terms of your relationship to Zen Buddhism, and particularly the sangha and leadership of the Atlanta Soto Zen Center (ASZC).

Basically, how you actualize Shukke Tokudo will be unique to your life and your embrace of buddhadharma. This would be true if you were never to set foot in the ASZC again, and never have any contact with its sangha.

However, for most Disciples, participation in the activities of ASZC and interaction with the members of its sangha are the practical result of undergoing discipleship. So it is necessary that you understand what you may expect from

ASZC and what the leadership of ASZC expects from you.

As an Disciple, you are assigned a senior teacher as individual Mentor, for at least the first year following your ceremony. You are encouraged to choose one of the senior teachers with whom you feel an affinity, or with whom it is most natural for you to associate.

You should expect that your Mentor be available to you on a regular or emergency basis, and that they will do all in their power to foster your practice of Zen and an understanding of buddhadharma.

You are expected to be proactive in this mentoring relationship, attending when your assigned teacher is Doshi, and in all practicable ways, supporting and participating in her /his activities. This in no way is intended to preempt your relations with other teachers at ASZC, including the Abbot.

You are encouraged to attend regularly, including at least one sesshin each year, especially when your Mentor is lead, or Doshi. You are also expected to attend one week- long retreat.

In addition to the practice relationship, you are invited to participate at a deeper level in the activities of ASZC. The opportunities for involvement include:

- Rotating through AM / PM weekly schedule
- Personal assistance to teachers
- Staffing ASZC events
- Accompanying teachers on outreach
- Housework chores at ASZC
- Inviting friends to ASZC
- Suggestions for program improvements
- Cooking for sesshin and weekly schedule

You are also expected to support ASZC financially to the degree that you can afford; the suggested minimum donation for your ceremony is \$300; minimum monthly pledge of \$75 (exceptions for reasonable cause). The most important

contribution you make to ASZC is your presence and harmonious camaraderie with the sangha.

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APPENDIX III: Dharma Bibliography

1. USA-Japan The Kyosaku; Mokurai; Archive Matsuoka Roshi ASZC
Chant Book Soto Shu Zen Mind Beginner's Mind Suzuki Roshi Dogen Zen
Shohaku Okumura Roshi Sitting under the Bodhi Tree Soto Zen Educ. Center
Shobogenzo-zuimonki S Okumura Trans The Wholehearted Way Okumura,
Leighton Trans Dogen's Extensive Record Okumura, Leighton Trans Zen
Master Eihei Dogen's Monastic Regulations I Shohei Trans Dogen's Manuals
of Zen Meditation Carl Bielefeldt Dogen's 300 Koans S Okumura Trans

2. Japan The Zen Teaching of "Homeless" Kodo Kosho Uchiyama Roshi
Opening the Hand of Thought Kosho Uchiyama Roshi

The Right-Dharma-Eye Treasury Eihei Dogen (Shobogenzo) Nishijima and
Cross Trans

Nishiyama Trans

3. China The Platform Sutra; The Zen Teaching of Hui-neng Red
Pine Trans Zen's Chinese Heritage Andy Ferguson
Pre-Soto and Soto lineage Chapters beginning on pages: 15, 20, 24, 25, 29, 37,
48, 71, 97, 107, 142, 180, 210, 213, 216, 218, 219, 223, 226, 256, 258, 290, 312,
334, 360, 363, 384, 404, 405, 417, 419, 438, 450, 454, 461 Book of Serenity;
One Hundred Zen Dialogues Thomas Cleary Trans

4. India The Zen Teachings of Bodhidharma Red Pine The
Diamond Sutra Red Pine The Heart Sutra Red Pine The
Surangama Sutra Charles Luk Sutras & Shastras available in
various translations:

The Four Noble Truths The Lankavatara
Sutra The Lotus Sutra (Threefold) The
Vimalakirti Sutra The Ekottara Agama Sutra
Treatise on the Middle Way
(Madhyamaka-karika)

APPENDIX IV: Sangha Service

1. Newcomer Instruction If one is practicing the Soto emphasis on zazen, one should be able to translate that into instructions for others, both Lay Teacher and Zen Priest. The first impression is often the most important and lasting one that a Newcomer has of Zen, so giving instruction well is an example of actualizing the Precept of not defaming the three Treasures.

Essentially, one shows and tell others the basics of zazen in a simple, clear, and user- friendly way, and avoids saying or doing anything that might distort the dharma or create confusion or misunderstanding. Guidelines written in the Disciple to Disciple manual are meant to remind one of the basics, but this should become second-nature, so that the explanation is organic and holistic, rather than a mechanical presentation. One should avoid referring to notes, and speak from the heart.

Minimum training
sequence:

- Undergo
instruction
- Observe someone (Hojo)
instructing
- Give instruction with supervision
(Hojo)
- Instruct others on one's
own

One should continue to attend regularly scheduled Newcomer instruction periods, participating as instructor, and attend Newcomer workshops as available, at least once per year. Proficiency shown by conducting Newcomer instruction with Hojo present.

2. Practice Discussion Zen Priest and Lay Teacher must be able to offer Practice Discussion, dealing with general issues that arise from Buddha (zazen), Dharma (study), and Sangha (community) dimensions of the student's daily life and practice. Proficiency recognized by the Head Monk (Shuso) ceremony.

3. Dharma Talk Zen Priest and Lay Teacher both are able to offer Dharma talks, formal and/or informal, dealing with general issues that arise from practice and daily life. Proficiency will be recognized by the Head Monk (Shuso) ceremony for both. (See APPENDIX V: Giving Dharma Talks)

NOTE: 4th Friday Forum Training in communication and listening skills, while not a formal requirement, is often offered through this forum and it is recommended that all Lay Teacher and Zen Priest candidates participate for a segment of eight weeks to gain added proficiency in skillful means.

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4. Dokusan The Transmitted Zen Priest is authorized to offer Dokusan, dealing with specific issues and experiences that arise from Buddha (zazen), Dharma (study), and Sangha (community) dimensions of the student's daily life and practice. The focus of these discussions is the clarification of buddhadharma, and should not become problem-solving or psychoanalytical in nature. The key phrase is "What does this have to do with Zen?" Training in Dokusan is based on the psychotherapeutic model of participant-observation but should not devolve into amateur therapy.

Minimum training
sequence:

- Attend Dokusan with Hojo (multiple times)
- Observe Hojo giving Dokusan (at least once; by invitation)
- Offer Dokusan with Hojo observing and participating
- Give Dokusan on one's own (after Transmission) Proficiency in Dokusan is recognized by the Transmission ceremony.

5. Application of the Stick (Kyosaku) The Kyosaku ("Warning Stick; Blow of Compassion") is very honored in our tradition. Its use is recommended by our

founder, Matsuoka Roshi, and we encourage our members to try it. A Zen Priest must be proficient in its diligent and sensitive use; a Lay Teacher need not be.

Proficiency will be shown by practicing on Hojo, demonstrating 1, 2, 3, and 4 levels of intensity with accuracy and confidence, so as to provide encouragement while preventing harm to the sangha.

The Zen Priest must also be able to introduce and explain the meaning of and reason for the practice without creating prejudice or confusion.

Formal handling of the stick from altar to striking and back to altar, including handing off to another attendant, as well as its explanation must be demonstrated to Hojo's satisfaction before a trainee is allowed to use the stick on sangha.

6. Posture Correction Touch is one of the most direct means of teaching, including the blow from the stick or a blow from an old priest's staff (I owe you 30 blows!) This is a test of mindfulness.

A Zen Priest or a Lay Teacher who intends to conduct zazen sessions must master the art of correcting posture without creating distraction, discomfort or injury to the sangha. Proficiency will be shown by demonstrating to Hojo's satisfaction.

7. Daily Service ASZC currently offers weekday morning and evening zazen, with little emphasis on service. Anyone responsible for scheduled periods should be familiar with simple opening and closing protocols, along with timing signals (Doan) standards, at a minimum.

The form of service at ASZC is adapted from Chicago Zen Buddhist Temple, Austin Zen Center and Sanshinji Zen Community, revised to combine the best practices, documented in Service and Chant Books. An ASZC Disciple should be able to perform service without assistance, as Matsuoka Roshi trained us. Anyone who wishes to pursue the priest track should become familiar with the full service, and be able to perform

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traditional Doshi or Doan roles (other roles with more personnel). These services include "feature" chants which vary from day to day, and differences in morning, noon and evening services.

Candidates can learn these in detail during zazenkai and sesshin styled

“Sangha.” Candidates can also make an appointment with a senior teacher for off-schedule training, and can get on-the-job training most Saturdays.

8. Zazenkai and Sesshin A Priest should be familiar with and able to organize and lead day sits (zazenkai), longer retreats and sesshin, to delegate and train others in the various roles that are required for the successful conduct of intensive practice. A Lay Teacher may also conduct such intensives along the lines of dharma study, without emphasis on Soto protocols or the training of juniors.

9. Ceremonies A Priest should be able to perform certain ceremonies of service to foster and enhance the training of junior students. They include:

- Zaike Tokudo, Lay
Initiation
- Shukke Tokudo, Ordination
(Discipleship)
- Shuso, Head Monk Installation and
Recognition
- Shiho, Priest
Transmission
- Lay Teacher
Certification

A Lay Teacher should be able to perform the first and last of these.

A Priest should also be prepared to offer secular ceremonies for the sangha as desired and appropriate, such as:

- Wedding
- Infant
Naming
- Funeral
- Memorial for Individual(s) recently passed or on
anniversary
- Funeral for Sentient Beings (e.g.
pets)

10. Special Occasions A Priest or Lay Teacher should be able to lead a variety of services that occur regularly on calendar dates, to mark certain holidays, and/or intended to commemorate the deceased. A Lay Teacher should be familiar with, and able to discourse about the significance of each, and may choose not to celebrate them ceremonially. They include:

- Hanamatsuri (Festival of the Flowers); Buddha's Birthday
- Rohatsu, Buddha's Enlightenment
- Vesak, Buddha's Nirvana
- Obon, Ancestor Memorial
- O-higan, Spring and Fall reflection on the Paramitas
- Fusatsu, Renewal of the Precepts (monthly or quarterly)
- New Year's
- Founder's Day

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APPENDIX V: Giving Dharma Talks

Introduction Public speaking is said to be one of the most stressful activities that one can undertake. The degree of stress can be relieved by preparation, and over time with practice and experience it will diminish greatly. The orientation in speaking about Zen or Buddhism to an audience should be the same as the basic attitude of a disciple to the sangha, one of service and nurturing mind. In other words, one should become proficient to the degree that when and where circumstances are appropriate, one can set aside the script and improvise to meet the needs of the audience. This is especially true when doing Public talks, so a unique approach to this situation is outlined below. Most of these

approaches apply to speaking at the Zen center, in the beginning under the supervision of the teacher.

1.

NOVICE

Way-Seeking Mind Talk(s) The first talk given as Head Monk (Shuso), this talk can be repeated in other venues and is usually well-received, as it is personal, and reminds the audience of their own initial experiences. A suggested outline along the lines of a reporter's questions:

WHAT you feel the most important thing in Zen Buddhism is to you and your practice. WHEN you first encountered Zen or Buddhism, a sketch of your situation at the time and any relevant details of interest.

WHERE you began practice, description of the environment and any peculiar or germane attributes of the sangha, teacher, and environment.

HOW you came to be exposed to the dharma, and what impelled you to pursue your training; the factors that encouraged you to continue in the intervening years.

2.

INTERMEDIATE

Dharma Reference Talk(s) Typical approach of many Zen students and teachers, the talk is based on a reference from the written record, often one of a series of commentaries offered on the same subject or text, as in a reading group or class. It is important to carefully select the subject, one that is of personal interest, and around which you can generate genuine energy and excitement. It is also very important to avoid reading too much to the audience. Intersperse the quotes with personal comments and taking questions and comments from the audience. A suggested outline:

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Reference Name and show the reference so that interested parties can follow up with their own study of it (provide copies if feasible).

Introduction Tell them what you're going to tell them: a brief, concise overview outline of what you are going to discuss, and remind them how you want to handle Q&A; either at the end, at intervals where you pause, or as they arise. Each has a different dynamic and works for different subjects and styles.

Exposition Begin your explanation and analysis of the work, including:

Quotes carefully selected to support the points you are making.

Pause as appropriate to allow feedback and to correct misimpressions and further fine tune your approach.

Personal Bring it back to why this text or teaching is important to you personally, how it fits into and clarifies your practice-experience, particularly in:

Zazen as the central focus of our practice.

Q&A Interspersed if desired, but at least at the end, answering where you can, but also further questioning the audience (e.g. "What makes you ask that question?")

3.

ADVANCED

Extemporaneous Talk(s) When confident of one's grasp of the material, one may choose to wing it. In this case, simply quote or bring up the subject, and spontaneously regale the audience with exposition and analysis, anecdotes from daily life that illustrate the point, et cetera. Be sure to include the opportunity for audience participation through Q&A and so as to keep on message and on track with their grasp of the material. This approach works well with a Reference talk given previously, where rehearsal of the same material makes it familiar. Be careful not to become complacent or to develop too pat a presentation.

Hossen The free give-and-take of challenge-response (Mondo) exchanges with other students is done formally at the end of the Shuso training period, but is also useful in sharpening one's skills in immediate, unpremeditated exposition of dharma in the present moment. It can be based on a Reference, such as a koan or anecdote quoted from the written record. Care must be taken to avoid degenerating into an intellectual or semantic exercise.

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PUBLIC

a. Interactive Talk(s) One may give a public talk, titled, for example, "What is Zen?" Then, when beginning the talk, turn it around on the audience and ask them what they think Zen is. There is no way of preparing, as there is no identified subject. A suggested outline of this approach:

SURVEY the audience for a show of hands regarding how many have:

- Practiced formally under a Zen teacher in a practice center
- Practiced meditation on their own (or yoga, TM, etc)
- Studied Buddhism or Zen in college course
- Read about Zen or Buddhism
- Seen movies or other cultural exposure (travel in Japan, China, etc)
- Know nothing about Zen or Buddhism

This exercise will illustrate for the audience, as well as the speaker, the range of practice-experience represented in the present group, which usually shows a bell curve with the fewest at 1 and 6, the great bulge in the middle.

INTERVIEW them about the subject; ask a member from each group in the Survey their name and what really brought them here tonight, and to briefly answer the question “What is Zen” from their perspective: their present conception of Buddhism or Zen practice. Take notes on four or five different definitions or ideas, no more than six unless you can group them, as in speaking to these, each will take at least five minutes or as much as ten. Unless the speaker is very entertaining and/or informative, an hour of speaking overall is about as much as one can expect an audience to sit still for these days.

ORGANIZE your response, quickly numbering or otherwise grouping the notes you have made, so as to be more orderly in your exposition.

ADDRESS the comments made, referencing the person by name if memory serves, asking them to repeat if necessary, and first point out the positive side of their comment, explaining how it is true in some sense, and its importance to Zen.

CORRECT any misconception or one-sided view, not dismissing it as wrong, but pointing out the other side, to give a more well-rounded view of the teaching.

REVIEW the topics brought out, and discuss any germane connections between them, or to other traditional teachings with which they audience may not be familiar. Invite the audience members who gave you the comments to speak about them again, having heard the speaker’s clarification.

Q&A Open the floor to general question and discussion to round out the dialog.

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b. Topical and Timely Talks Public audiences often respond to the topic of a talk if the speaker is not well known. In speaking to a hospital, YMCA, college class, or church, choose a topic that is relevant to that group, and approach it from a Zen or Buddhist perspective. Often the host or contact can suggest an appropriate area to discuss. Other topics for a general audience, one invited to the Zen center, for example, may be taken from the media and, again, presented in the context of Zen or Buddhist teaching.

c. **Panels and Debates** Public talks can benefit from the presence of an expert or panel on the topic. One may find oneself the sole representative of the Zen perspective on a panel of other religious or philosophical practitioners, for example. In this case, it is important not to attempt to appear as an expert in the topic, but instead to represent the Zen approach to the subject as honestly as possible. This type of situation can turn into a debate, which is to be approached with all due caution. Zen Buddhism itself is not up for debate, and one must be careful not to allow the dialog to deteriorate to a level of acrimony or argument.

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APPENDIX VI: Administration Guidelines

Introduction The administration of a Zen center is the province of a Board of Directors (BOD) under the structure of a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization. However, a Zen Priest or Teacher must have some familiarity with, and working knowledge of, the administrative demands of managing a program of offering Zen meditation to the public — including, for example, funding, scheduling, and other required logistics.

Incorporation; Board of Directors STO recommends the incorporation of its affiliates, and can provide guidance in the process of developing by-laws, and provide models for other founding documents. The BOD's primary responsibility is fiduciary and financial. The Directors assume roles that directly support the operation of the program, and act to ensure its survival by managing its finances, from fundraising to budgeting and investment decisions. The officers of the BOD typically include a Chair, who may also be CEO, Secretary and Treasurer. They are also responsible for directing the activities of the Center and its members to align with the charter granted by the state, and to conform to any legal restrictions that surround the mission and purpose. Usually, the BOD will delegate responsibilities to officers to manage and report back, such as Practice Schedule, Facility, Fundraising, and so on, as needed. The BOD is essentially a policy making body, and not oriented to day-to-day operations, while their designees, such as the CEO and Officers, carry out and delegate tactical, day-to-day operational decisions.

Container and Content The organization consists of two main tracks of

administration activities, one for the facility, the “container,” and one for the program, the “content.” There is an old Zen saying that when a precious jewel appears in the world, not to worry — a container will appear to contain it. The precious jewel in Zen is “genuine practice”; thus the first priority is the program. The facility, while necessary, is secondary. Thus, administration should be oriented toward avoiding an overweening focus on facility, to the detriment of Zen practice. This is the point of many anecdotes in the history of Zen.

In broad terms, the container of the practice program — facility, staffing, maintenance, upkeep, and their funding — constitute the primary responsibility of the BOD. The content of the program — practice schedule, training of faculty, curriculum of lectures and study material, and the degree program of stages of training — are the bailiwick of the Abbot / Abbess, their advisory Council of Senior Teachers and affiliate Practice Leaders (AC), and the other Teachers and Disciples. As a matter of practicality, the members of the BOD are often the members of the AC, but not necessarily so.

Practice Schedule A general rule of thumb is that in order to offer weekly public or group practice, a minimum staff of four is required. In this model, each of the four has a once-a-month commitment to open and close the Center on a rotating basis, soliciting a substitute when personal schedules raise a conflict. This is needed to ensure continuity and to avoid being

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closed without notice, which disappoints and discourages the members.

This formula is related to the fact that most members will be lay people who have work and family obligations, and cannot individually and independently commit to being in attendance every week. It is also based on the proposition, supported by anecdotal evidence, that the minimum schedule for developing and retaining a sangha is weekly.

Consistency is important to continuity as well. This means that the four members who commit to opening should be trained to the first levels of the Stage of Discipleship, where they minimally know how to give basic instructions to newcomers, time the sitting with appropriate bells and other signals, and explain the minimum protocol needed for sitting. It does not imply that they need to offer Service, chanting, or other more traditional practices.

Once a sitting group has grown to a dozen or so regulars, it is usually stable.

This is the point at which it may need a formal Practice Leader and a more formal relationship to the STO practice stages, protocols and administration.

Administrative Requirements Until a full BOD is established, a Practice Leader of an affiliate, whether a Transmitted Zen Priest, Lay Zen Teacher, or at a previous Stage in the practice path, should be prepared to undertake the following minimum administrative tasks, all of which STO staff and leadership are prepared to support and guide from experience:

STARTUP

ADMINISTRATION

- FACILITY for regular practice
- SCHEDULE regular sitting to the degree feasible under present circumstances
- PROMOTE, announce and otherwise attract interested practitioners
- FUND activities by collecting donations, establish bank account, bookkeeping

PRACTICE

PROGRAM

- CONDUCT minimal opening, practice and closing protocols
- TRAIN others in protocols to substitute as necessary for continuity
- ATTEND training at ASZC or other training center to enhance personal skills

FACILITY

Find and prepare a sitting space adequate for up to a dozen practitioners. This may be a public space, either shared or exclusive, or if necessary, in one's home. The latter is not recommended except as a starting point, with the proviso that the group is on the lookout for another space to move into when stabilized financially. Research the community for possible shared spaces, such as UU churches, yoga studios, and other groups that have an affinity for Zen but are not competitive.

Eventually prepare to secure a space that is optimal for practice, including easy

storage of cushions and other supplies and implements for meditation. Ideally, the space would be exclusive so that the zendo can remain set up without having to move in, set up, break down and move out each time.

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