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The ZCLA Curriculum

The ZCLA Curriculum follows the Center's **Circle of Life (Mandala)**. The Circle of Life is the teaching of the Five Buddha Families, which presents the wholeness of a mature human life.

The **Five Buddha Families** (also called Spheres) are Source, Study, Resources, Relationships, and Service. The essential practices of each Family are zazen (Source); study (Study); lineage, precepts, and health (Resource); relationships, liturgy, art, ritual, and sexuality (Relationships); and everyday acts of kindness, service, livelihood, and world learning (Service). We are creating a curriculum that addresses your development in each of these areas and in collective awakening and wisdom.

The Circle of Life is a three-dimensional hologram of the wholeness of life. Each sphere is a fractal of all the others—all the components are contained in each sphere. For example, when we place the Relationship sphere in the center of the hologram, it contains elements of zazen, study, service, lineage, precepts, and health. The Circle of Life is used for the structure of our organization as well as for personal practice.

The **curriculum** offers skillful means to awaken and deepen, refine and integrate one's practice with Life. The practice of Buddhadharma is

transformative; one turns and is turned by it.

We feel that the present circumstances of your life are the perfect vehicle for your awakening. How can we use these very circumstances to “forget the self, practice the precepts, and serve others”? We aim to provide the practices and skillful means that enable you to live an awake life. In our view, *everything* in your life is practice itself.

The Center has a **Teachers Circle** that offers instruction and guidance under the direction of the Head Teacher, Roshi Wendy Egyoku Nakao. Circle members are Senseis (fully empowered Dharma Teachers) in the White Plum Lineage: Merle Kodo Boyd, Kipp Ryodo Hawley, John Daishin Buksbazen, Raul Ensho Berge, Patricia Shingetsu Guzy, and Rabbi Don Ani Shalom Singer.

In addition, all members of the Sangha are teachers and students of one another through their stewardship of the Center. We are committed to individual and collective awakening.

**NOTE: NO ONE IS TURNED AWAY
FOR LACK OF FUNDS.**

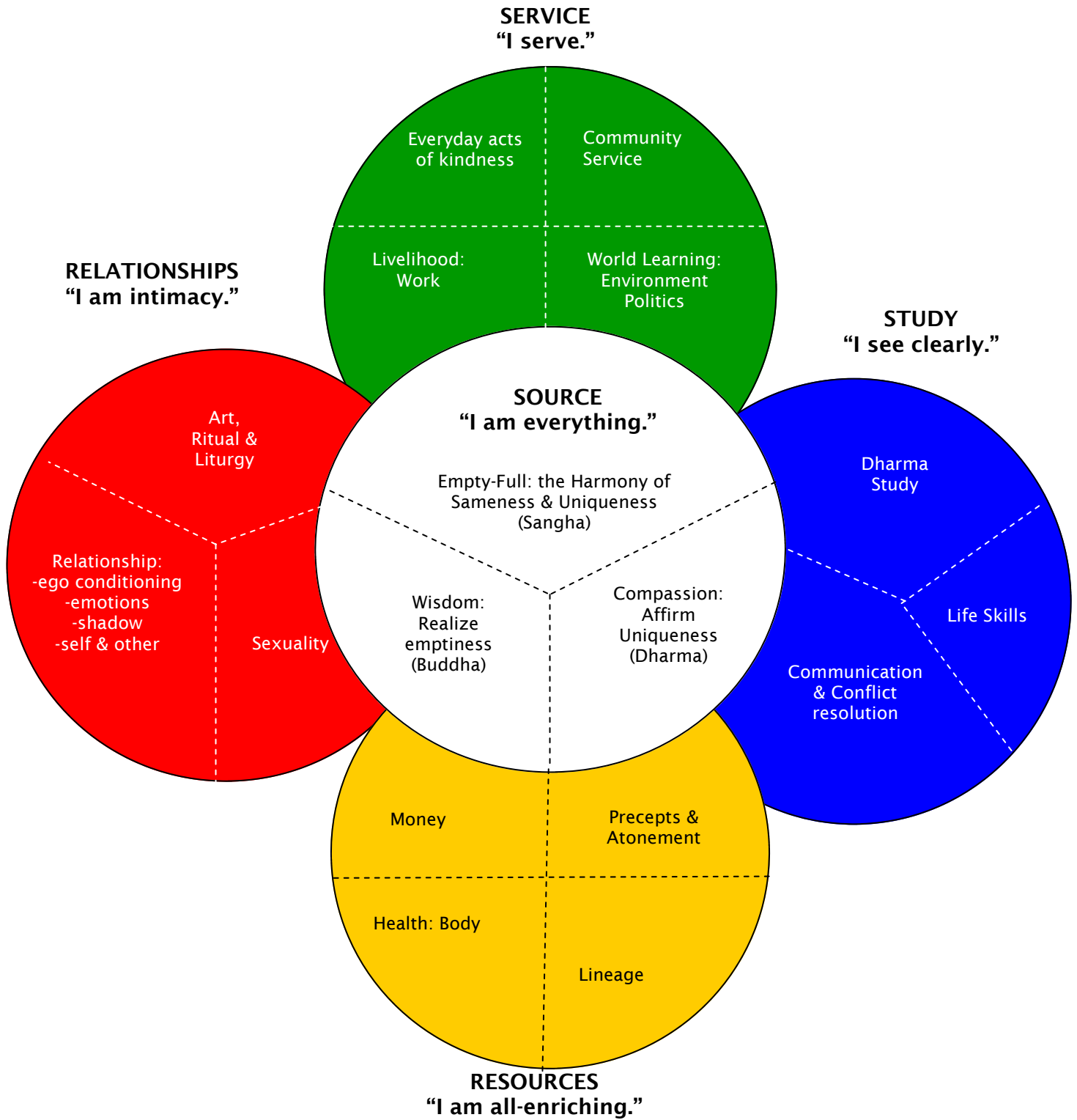
The Dharma Training Fund assists those with financial need. Please inquire.

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The Circle of Life of the ZCLA Organization



The Personal Practice Mandala



Source Sphere

Zazen is the practice of the Source Sphere. The primary characteristic is “include everything; everything included.” Since the Source is essentially empty of a self, it is empty-full. The key ingredient is non-duality.

Sesshin. Literally translated, sesshin means “to unify the mind.” It is an extended silent retreat in which our normal daily schedules are set aside to allow for a more focused zazen practice, integrated with walking meditation, face-to-face interviews, mindful work practice, chanting, rest, oryoki meals, and talks. Sesshin is an important and valuable opportunity to deepen our practice.

Introduction to Sesshin. This is an introduction to sesshin practice for those new to sesshin practice as well as for experienced sitters. There are more opportunities for instruction, questions, and explanations than is possible in the silence of regular sesshin. In addition, the sitting periods are shorter and the schedule lighter.

Tangaryo. Tangaryo is an all-day sitting which is open to all and required of members and new residents. You may sit on your own, under the guidance of an experienced practitioner, at a date agreed upon by you and the coordinator. Contact our office to arrange a time for individual Tangaryo. A group Tangaryo takes place several times a year. Typically, the sitting lasts from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with an hour off for lunch and a tea/discussion to end the day.

Wall-gazing Days. The main practice on Wall-gazing Day is zazen, sitting in meditation facing the wall in the style of the great ancestor Bodhidharma. The sitting schedule begins every hour on the hour, followed by brief walking meditation. The day is in silence and includes meals. On Wall-gazing Days, a **Prayer Circle** dedicated to ending suffering in a current world event is held in place of morning service.

Zazen. The core of Zen practice and training is zazen, or sitting meditation, which is offered weekdays at dawn and evenings, and on weekend mornings. Intensive zazen practice is offered

monthly in the form of Zazenkai or Sesshin. Members study individually with a teacher.

Zazenkai. A one-day retreat of zazen with face-to-face interview, walking meditation, chanting, meals, work, and a talk or class. The schedule is similar to a day of sesshin.

Study Sphere

Study is the practice of the Study Sphere. The primary characteristic is “seeing clearly.” The key ingredient is “practice and study are not two.”

Bearing Witness Events. Transformation and healing are possible through the practice of Bearing Witness. Bearing Witness means listening from the place of not-knowing, without judging and grounded in reality; listening to become one with the other. We give another human being complete recognition and acceptance. It is a practice of going beyond our imagined limits; a chance to see beyond our small selves and begin to eliminate the barriers between “us” and “them.”

Bearing Witness events have included a Street Retreat--a plunge into the unknown which offers an opportunity to raise our consciousness about living on the streets by doing so for a few days; the 60th-Year Commemoration of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and a day-long reading of *Shiviti: A Vision by Ka-tzetnik 135633*, a survivor of the Auschwitz death camp.

Conversation About Practice (CAP).

A conversation and inquiry on practice themes are posed by a member of the Teachers Circle. The session begins with brief remarks and opening question. A talking piece is used.

Face-to-Face Teaching. Private meetings or interviews with a teacher for working on one’s practice, instruction, and checking of one’s practice are offered during zazen periods. This is an important component of Zen training.

Public Face-to-Face. From time to time, Roshi or a Sensei offer face-to-face teachings with the assembled sangha. All may participate in one-on-one dialogue with Roshi.

Group study. Many opportunities for group study are provided in the form of classes and workshops.

Introduction to Council. This class covers the tenets of Council practice, including how to facilitate a Council and the special circumstances of Council when it is practiced in the context of ongoing relationships in the Sangha. Council

practice emphasizes mindfully communicating with each other while holding the intentions of deep listening, speaking from the heart, and lean speech.

Practice Periods. A 90-day Practice Period is held annually from October through December. During this period, practitioners increase their practice commitments for zazen and study. Practice Periods of shorter durations are sometimes held throughout the year.

Practicing with Shadow Energies. This series explores how shadow energies form and how to reclaim them through spiritual practices. Shadow energies are any energy—both so-called positive and negative—that one does not include as part of oneself. They are also known as “disowned” energies. The series addresses the common misconceptions that spiritual practices bypass shadow energy and that practice does not include certain energies which one may consider to be undesirable.

Scholar or Artist-in-Residence. From time to time, scholars and artists are in residence at Normandie Mountain, sharing their work by offering workshops or seminars and showing their art. Scholars and artists have included translator Bill Red Pine Porter, clown master Moshe Yoowho Cohen, sculptor Tom Matsuda, and artist Barbara Yates, who sculpted the eight-foot Kanzeon in the garden wild space.

Sutra & Text Study. Classes on Buddhist texts and sutras are held from time to time. Text study has included the “Verses of the Faith Mind,” the “Identity of Relative and Absolute,” the “Fukanzazengi,” and koan collections. Sutra study has included the *Heart Sutra*, *Diamond Sutra*, *Platform Sutra*, *Lotus Sutra*, *Vimalakirti Sutra*, and *The Way of the Bodhisattva (Bodhicaryayatarā)*. A text or sutra is selected several times a year and is used as the topic for Teisho and Dharma Talks.

Sutra Copying. Members gather occasionally to undertake the ancient practice of copying traditional Buddhist sutras. Copying is in English. Guidelines are provided.

Study Sphere continued

Three Steps to Mindfulness. This workshop presents a roadmap to the mindful life from the perspective of Zen practice. This map helps us step through our own mindscape, showing us the mental realms where we find samadhi, delusion, and both self-ish and self-less action. We'll see how to integrate and balance these realms, developing a mindfulness that helps us live our life in a dynamic way inspired by the living moment. There will be discussion time for learning the steps and periods of zazen to practice them. We'll also look at how this method dovetails with the Three Zen Peacemaker Tenets and other Buddhist practices.

Thursday Evening Dharma Talks. Dharma Talks or Teisho (talk by Roshi) are given nearly every Thursday evening. The talks are focused on a text or theme, usually pursued over several months. Texts are announced beforehand.

Training Stewards. There are several positions that are considered specific training in service for the Sangha. They are usually appointed by the abbot. Training Stewards include Development Steward, Program Steward, Guest Steward, Parking Steward, Samu leaders, Co-Tenzo Coordinators, Day Managers, and Stewards of Circles.

Zazen Instruction for Newcomers (ZP Series)
ZCLA is committed to offering meditation instruction to all who enter the temple gate, and has done so for almost 40 years. Our introductory Zen practice program includes beginning meditation instruction (ZP-1 and ZP-2), a day of practice at ZCLA (ZP-3), Tangaryo (a step to becoming a formal member of the Center), the Basic Practices at ZCLA series (ZP-4), and One Hundred Hours of Zazen in One Hundred Days (ZP-5).

ZP-1: Introduction to Zen Practice.

Instruction on the basics of Zen sitting and walking practices, specifically focusing on postures of the body, breath, and mind. There is opportunity for short practice sessions and questions and answers. This class is offered every Sunday morning from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. Please arrive by 8:15 a.m. Attendees are also invited to a Dharma talk, a Dharma chat, or a Conversation About Practice (CAP), all offered on most Sunday mornings from 11

a.m. to noon, followed by a meal. Advance registration is not required.

ZP-2: Refining Your Practice. A follow-up to ZP-1, this class gives newcomers the opportunity to return for further guidance from an instructor. The class is held on Sundays from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. It includes attending the Zen Buddhist service at 8:30 a.m. and sitting one period in the Zendo at 9:45 a.m. Attendees are also invited to a Dharma talk, a Dharma chat, or a Conversation About Practice (CAP), offered on most Sunday mornings from 11 a.m. to noon, followed by a meal. ZP-1 or established Zen practice at another center is prerequisite, but advance registration is not required.

ZP-3: A Practice Day at ZCLA. For those who wish to explore practice at the Center, an instructor will take you through a day of practice at ZCLA. You will experience morning service, zazen, a private interview with a Zen teacher, a teasnack, a Precept Circle, and the monthly Day of Reflection where the focus is on personal practice with the Bodhisattva precepts. There will be ample time for questions and discussion with the instructor. From 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. ZP-3 takes place on the third Saturday of every month. Please register in advance by calling the office. Prerequisite: ZP-1 and ZP-2, or established Zen practice at another center.

ZP-4: Basic Practices at ZCLA. This series is offered on the second Sunday of every month. The classes can be taken in any order. ZP-4 is open to all and has no fee. Pre-registration is requested.

ZP4-1: Forms of Practice. This class covers the forms of practice at ZCLA, including a review of the basics of zazen (the postures of the body, the breath, and the mind); the practices of breathing, shikantaza, and koan; zendo procedures; the role of Face-to-Face interview; the teacher-student relationship; and circle practice at ZCLA. Class ends with a recitation of the *Fukanzazengi*. Class materials: *Fukanzazengi* and The Zendo (ZCLA Bulletin #2).

Study Sphere continued

ZP4-2: Service, Liturgy and Lineage. This class covers our temple and teaching lineage. Included is a discussion of how service is conducted at ZCLA, the role of ritual and ceremony, our practice of linking service to events in the world, the sick list, monthly memorial service, rites of passage services for the Sangha (baby blessings, weddings, funerals, etc.), and a description of the Gate of Sweet Nectar service. The class does a service together. Also included is Buddha Hall protocol. Text: ZCLA sutra book.

ZP4-3: Everyday Life as Practice. This class explores the Three Treasures and Precepts as points of reference in everyday life activities, including work, family, relationships, and ordinary life tasks. The main point is the inherent practicality of the teachings. Materials: Precepts (Day of Reflection document).

ZP4-4: ZCLA's Organizational Mandala. This class looks into the evolving organizational structure of ZCLA. We will discuss Shared Stewardship, the Center's organizational mandala (the Five Buddha Families perspective and components), ZCLA's Mission and Vision statements, Core Values, and the decision-making structure of ZCLA. Materials: ZCLA Mandala, the Mission and Vision statements, the Core Values document.

ZP-5: One Hundred Hours of Zazen in One Hundred Days. This class is aimed at helping members establish a daily practice of zazen and support the practice of others. participants commit to sitting for one hour a day for 100 consecutive days. The coordinator will introduce you to the practice, assign a partner (or help you choose one), and give you a Practice Book to track your sitting.

Service Sphere

Service is the practice of the Service Sphere. The primary characteristic is serving self-and-other and its key ingredient is “Does the action serve the whole?”

Angulimala Prison Program. A program of volunteers who regularly visit prisons in the Southern California area. In addition to on-site visits, volunteers correspond with inmates and provide reading materials on Buddhism.

Compassionate Service for the Dying Retreat. Since 2006 the Center offers weekends for professional caregivers. The retreat is based on the three tenets of not-knowing, bearing witness, and healing action as an approach to serve the dying, their families, and the caregivers themselves.

Day of Dana at ZCLA and Food Pantry. Center members donate food to the local Los Angeles food bank through weekly donations during the Gate of Sweet Nectar service. In December, a Day of Dana is held with the Esperanza Center. Families in need in our neighborhood come to the Center for holiday celebrating and to receive baskets filled with food and items for children.

Environmental Education. The Brown-Green Group is active in studying the interconnection of environment, Sangha, and individual practice. It offers useful information on environmental practices for individuals and the ZCLA organization, workshops by renowned leaders, hikes, and informational movies throughout the year.

Individual Service Work. As their livelihood, members are engaged in various forms of social service, including non-violence training and advocacy, housing for the aged, environmental work, psychotherapy, education, and union work.

Interfaith Relationships. The Center maintains a close relationship with Rabbi Don Singer (Sensei Ani Shalom) of Shir Hadash and occasionally sponsors Jewish events. From time to time, Center members engage in interfaith conversations with other religious denominations.

Zen Humor. The Institute for Sacred Mischief and Contemplative Clowning (ISMACC). Led by master clown Moshe “Mr. Yoowhoo” Cohen. Workshops include sacred clowning exercises and performances.

Zen Peacemaker Sangha: The ZPS is an association of groups founded by, or led by, seniors within the empowered lineage of Bernie Glassman or groups that practice Zen and socially engaged Zen. The ZPS is created to share our diverse methods of practice, service and teaching, to continue to educate and develop ourselves as practitioners and teachers, and to provide the best possible opportunities for practice, realization and actualization for our students and the generations that follow.

Relationship Sphere

Relationship is the practice of the Relationship Sphere. The primary characteristic is “being intimate,” and its key ingredients are “unifying and integrating”—being aware of the impact of our actions on others.

Council Practice. Guided by facilitators, the participants sit in a circle, using The Three Tenets as a basic practice: not-knowing (being open to all that arises); bearing witness (right listening, right speech); and taking action. Participants speak just enough and practice including all views. The format includes using a talking piece and creating a ritual container.

Council Instruction. (See Introduction to Council Class in the Study Sphere.)

Council. Councils are held in many different venues throughout the Sangha. The word is used interchangeably at times with circle — precepts circles, shared stewardship, resident councils, special interest topics, etc.

Sangha Councils. Councils open to all Sangha members are held on topics that arise within the community of practitioners.

Dharma Chats. Monthly gatherings led by sangha members to discuss various dharma themes.

Many Hands and Eyes Circles. Many Hands and Eyes Circles are formed to attend to significant arising issues in the Sangha. MHAE circles study and research specific topics to present and teach the Sangha. For example, the MHAE/ Prison Project focuses on Sexual Violence Education and Ex-Prisoners’ Sangha Integration, and the MHAE/Collective Awakening and Wisdom focuses on how this manifests in a spiritual community.

Samu. “Samu” means “work with awareness” and is a basic training mode for Zen practitioners. The practice of fushinzamu (working together), emphasizes working together in various caretaking projects from gardening and kitchen cleaning to organizing and hosting sangha events.

Shared Stewardship. This ongoing program at ZCLA is aimed at developing an organizational model and practice forms for collective awakening. Shared Stewardship is a training ground for knowing the self, practicing the precepts, and serving others. It challenges each of us to discover and own our individual wisdom and contribute it to the collective wisdom of the group. The practice of Shared Stewardship strengthens the horizontal dimension, so that it can function in healthy relationship with the vertical dimension, both individually and organizationally.

Resource Sphere

The Lineage, Precepts, Health, Money, and Administration are the practice areas of the Resource Sphere. The primary characteristic is “taking care.” The key ingredients are respect for those who practiced in the past, ethical living, and care of the physical body.

Service (Liturgy). The Zen Center follows an annual liturgical calendar. It holds daily services comprised of chanting the foundational sutras and texts of the Zen lineage and dedicating their merits to the lineage and well-being of all. This is an opportunity for students to learn the many aspects of these ancient life-sustaining rituals.

Morning Service, from Monday through Saturday, consists of chanting of the Heart Sutra, The Relative and Absolute or Jeweled Mirrored Samadhi, and the Enmei Jukku Kannongyo or Sho Sai Myokichijo Dharani.

Evening Service, from Wednesday through Friday, consists of chanting the Daihishin Dharani.

Founder’s Service. The monthly Founder’s service honors the founders of ZCLA and ZCLA’s Zen lineage.

Memorial Services. A **Monthly Memorial** service honors all members and their relations recorded in the Book of the Past for that month. An **Annual Members Service** for all those who have recently passed is held on the last day of the year. An **Annual Donors Memorial** is held the first Saturday in February.

Prayer Chains and Prayer Circles. Prayer Chains are held for any member who is ill and in need of support. Members sign up to chant every half hour on a designated day. Prayer Circles are held prior to Wall-Gazing Days and are dedicated to ending suffering around particular world events.

Special Services. Special services include memorials, funerals, baby blessings, weddings, and other life-passage ceremonies.

Service Position Training. One of the forms of practice at ZCLA is an open invitation to participate in the various service positions necessary for the liturgies. This class offers an explanation of each of the positions, demonstrations, hands-on practice, and opportunities for follow-through in the form of service assignments. Everyone is encouraged to take advantage of this form of practice as a way of integrating more fully into the life of the Center. Offered twice a year; individual training is ongoing.

Precepts. The study and practice of the Sixteen Zen Bodhisattva Precepts is fundamental to the Zen life.

Day of Reflection. Once a month, we reaffirm our vows with a Day of Reflection on the precepts. The day includes recitation of the precepts, a short talk on the precept of the day, lunch, and a precept circle.

Ceremony of Atonement. Observed every six weeks, this ceremony includes the renewal of vows and precepts and bearing witness to one’s own conduct in the company of the Sangha. “At-one-ment” is an essential aspect of the Zen life.

Precepts Series. This series is an introduction to the sixteen Zen Bodhisattva Precepts and how these can guide us in our daily life. The series includes: The Three Treasures, The Three Pure Precepts and The Three Tenets, Cause and Effect, Atonement, Center’s Statement of Right Conduct, and the Ten Grave Precepts.

Jukai Series. This series is offered for those who are interested in receiving the Precepts (jukai) and formally becoming a Buddhist. The study includes ZCLA’s temple and transmission lineage, bowing practice, women ancestors, the Precepts ceremony itself, as well as the rakusu, bowing, and gassho. Prerequisite: Precepts Series.

Lineage Female and Male. A study of both the Buddhist women ancestor lineage and the traditional male ancestors line and temple lineage. We also cover personal lineage.

Sewing the Buddha's Robe. Students receive guidance on sewing a rakusu, the robe of the Buddha. The process includes gathering "discarded" cloth and dyeing it, cutting the cloth, and learning the unique stitches for sewing the robe while chanting.

Zen Stretching. A series of basic stretches to support sitting practice.

Tenzo Circle. The Tenzo Resource Steward and current tenzo (cook) coordinators, along with former coordinators, comprise this circle. It meets as needed to discuss policies and practices in the kitchen and tenzoship as a form of Zen training.

ZCLA Resources

ZCLA Buddha Essence Temple has resources available to support the practice of serious Zen practitioners. The primary resources are the following:

Affiliate Sanghas and Groups. The Center has several affiliated Sanghas led by ZCLA teachers. There are in New Jersey and Southern California. In addition, there are several sitting groups affiliated with the Center.

Bookstore. The ZCLA Bookstore offers a wide selection of books about Zen and Buddhism as well as practice supplies (zafus, zabutans, oryoki, incense) and related items. The store is also online at www.zcla.org.

Buildings and Grounds. Seven buildings and gardens provide a place for practice and residential Zen living in community.

Funds. Generous members have established monetary funds to support practice. These funds include the Dharma Training Fund (financial support for members tuition), the Sujata Fund (for women's practice), and the Sutra Fund (for library materials).

Library. The ZCLA library is a treasure trove of resources to supplement the Sangha's investigations into the Great Matter of Life and Death. The collection of over 5,000 volumes includes many rare and out-of-print books on Zen and Buddhist studies, and is continually renewed with recent publications. The library is available to all members for browsing, borrowing, and discovery. It is located on the second floor of the Dharma Hall.

Sangha. The Sangha is the community of practitioners of the Buddha Way, encompassing wide ranges in age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, work and career, and education. A major emphasis is collective awakening.

Statement of Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Core Practices. The Center is guided by this Statement in setting its priorities and in creating an environment for individual and collective wisdom and awakening. From time to time, the Center undertakes a review of these principles.

Statement of Right Conduct. The ethical foundations of practice at the Center are founded on the sixteen Zen Bodhisattva Precepts. The Statement also provides guidelines for addressing grievances.

Teachers. The Center has a Teachers Circle (TC) formed by the Abbot. The TC includes those who have received Dharma Transmission.

Website for Members. The Website is a primary resource for ZCLA members. It includes an interactive Center Mandala, the ZCLA calendar, the *Water Wheel*, dharma talks, practice texts, descriptions of ZCLA programs and events, reports from Circles, and Bookstore offerings.