

OPEN PALM SCHOOL OF ZEN: An Exploration

WHATS IN THIS DOCUMENT

- Thoughts for Discussion
- Entry Point and Core Practices
- Pathways of Training

A FEW DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Listening deeply to the river that is flowing
 1. What has been emerging at ZCLA over the past 20 years?
 2. What is wanting to emerge?
 3. How do we frame it?
2. What kind of *spiritual school* is this?
 1. Schools of Zen: family styles
 2. What is the purpose:
 1. Creates a platform for the future
 2. Defines our style (not tied to Soto Shu understanding)
 3. Way to communicate what and who we are
 4. Distinguish from other Zen Centers
 5. Clarify and Layout training paths
 6. Help us develop curriculums
 3. How would we characterize it in simple language?
 4. What is our style or flavor?
 1. School of inquiry
 2. Commitment to train in: *define*

3. Create a **Rule** for the OPSZ. The Rule captures the basic guidelines for conduct in OPSZ. An example would be *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (see also: *Benedict's Dharma: Buddhist Teachers Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict*). The Rule becomes a guiding text.
 1. The Bodhisattva Vow (entry point)
 2. The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts
 3. Flavor of Zen—inquiry, and so forth
 4. Social Justice Commitments. E.g., Zen Peacemakers include
 1. Stewardship of the earth
 2. Economic justice
 3. Gender equality
 4. Social Justice
 5. Other

4. Explore primary relationships
 1. Between ZCLA and Open Palm
 2. Between school and WPA: I see this school as anchored in the White Plum
 3. Between ZCLA and Soto Shu Institution
 4. Other?

LAYING OUT THE OPEN PALM SCHOOL

Entry Point: Taking the Bodhisattva Vow

Core Practices: What are the core practices of OPSZ?

Practice and study are not two: both are implied in each core practice. The primary methods of study are: Face-to-Face with a teacher and group study, experiential and texts.

1. The practice of Zazen (Could say the *practice and study of...*)
2. The practice of Koans
3. The practice of Precepts (includes *Ethics*)

4. The practice of Ceremony (includes *Liturgy and Ritual, public and personal*)
5. The practice of Shared Stewardship
6. The practice of Relationships (includes *Council*)
7. The practice of Embodiment (*Embodying?—use of the physical body to do basic life tasks*)
8. The practice of Peacemaking (Could say *Peacemaking and Social Justice?*)
9. Other?

Some basics:

1. Face-to-Face: facing ourselves, facing the true nature of life
2. Self-Care: practicing self care
3. Respect for self and others
4. Student-Teacher dynamics: OPSZ view
 1. Understanding Position and Role
 2. Understanding Student of Dharma regardless of position and role
 3. Mastery of Craft
5. Assumptions:
 1. Experiential investigation: not just intellectual pursuit
 2. Dharma is the thread that runs through all of one's life

THE PRACTICES: What are the core pathways of OPSZ?

A path lays out a course of study and practice which may result in a Transmission that is appropriate for a particular pathway. Transmission is at discernment of an empowered teacher and is never assumed or guaranteed. Transmission implies certain teaching functions.

1. The path of a Dharma Successor (transmitted Zen teacher)
2. The path of a Mitra (transmitted? Friendship at deepest possible level)
3. The path of a Preceptor (transmitted Precept teacher)
4. The path of a Priest (transmitted Pastoral Care and Conductor of Ceremony)

- 5. The path of a Medicine Carrier—totally not sure about this??
- 6. Others?

The Outline of PRACTICES. To develop these as practices, we need to identify the content, the offering, and what is the core study. The core study will identify subject areas and specific texts.

CORE PRACTICE	CONTENT	OFFERING	STUDY
<p>1. The practice of Zazen</p> <p>Palm position: Cosmic Mudra</p>	<p>How to Sit: Adjusting Body, Speech, & Mind.</p> <p>What the Buddha Taught: The Three Seals, Understanding Emptiness & Wisdom of Non- duality.</p> <p>Identifying Misconceptions & Expectations.</p>	<p>Daily Zazen Zazenkai Sesshin F2F with a Teacher Study Sessions Dharma Talks</p>	<p>Fukanzazengi The Four Noble Truths The Eightfold Path Shikantaza Gathas Gassho & Bowing Texts: ZCLA Basic Books Opening the Hand of Thought</p>
<p>2. The practice of Koans</p> <p>Palm position: Turning the Wheel Mudra?? or variant of Cosmic Mudra??</p>	<p>Directly experiencing MU Training with classic case koans Training with Inquiry</p>	<p>F2F with a Koan teacher Group koan exploration Dharma Talks</p>	<p>The ZCLA koan curriculum. Koan texts: list The Five Ranks Zen Dust & other Koan Study books</p>

CORE PRACTICE	CONTENT	OFFERING	STUDY
<p>3. The practice of the Precepts</p> <p>Palm position: Gassho Mudra</p>	<p>Study of the 16 Bodhisattva Precepts ZCLA Ethical Guidelines Exploration of Ethical Living Personal & organizational ethics</p>	<p>Dharma Talks Day of Reflection Ceremony of Atonement Jukai Tokudo Weddings Funerals</p>	<p>Texts: ZCLA Precepts Handbook ZCLA Ethics Documents Identify core texts</p>
<p>4. The practice of Ceremony</p> <p>Palm position: Hiding-Forms Mudra (kinhin mudra)</p>	<p>The components and meaning of Service The components and purpose of Ceremony Understanding Ritual Developing Ritual containers</p>	<p>Daily Services Gate of Sweet Nectar Special Ceremonies Individual Ceremonies</p>	<p>Gathas Gassho & Bowing ZCLA Service: Chants & meaning Study of Special Services Rites of Passages Texts:</p>
<p>5. The practice of Shared Stewardship</p> <p>Palm position: Empty-Bowl Mudra (Buddha's Alms Bowl: left palm up, right palm down held over left with space in between)</p>	<p>What is stewardship? The nature of a Sangha. The being of the Zen Center Organization. Organizational accountability. Aligning to interconnection Exploring Collective Wisdom</p>	<p>Circles for ZC stewarding. Understanding the energetic field of ZCLA is nurtured and sustained.</p>	<p>Text: Instructions to the Cook by Dogen Zenji Our own materials: Gradients of Agreement etc.</p>

CORE PRACTICE	CONTENT	OFFERING	STUDY
<p>6. The practice of Relationship</p> <p>Palm position: No-Fear Mudra</p>	<p>Learning Council: deep listening and speaking our truth</p> <p>Integrating Emotions</p> <p>Living the Precepts</p> <p>Learning fluidity of Perspectives</p> <p>Integrating Shadow</p> <p>Understanding Connection</p> <p>The role of Humor</p>	<p>Councils</p>	<p>Text: ZCLA Council Facilitators Handbook</p> <p>Handbook of Emotions</p> <p>Shadow text</p>
<p>7. The practice of Embodying</p> <p>Palm position: Touching-the-Ground Mudra</p>	<p>Doing ordinary everyday life activities with the body: physicality</p> <p>Bowing</p> <p>Walking</p> <p>Samu: care of physical campus</p>	<p>Cleaning</p> <p>Cooking</p> <p>Gardening</p> <p>Sewing</p> <p>Craft or Art making: pine basket weaving</p>	<p>Text: Tenzo Kyokun, Unknown Craftsman</p>

CORE PRACTICE	CONTENT	OFFERING	STUDY
<p>8. The practice of Peacemaking</p> <p>Palm position: Fulfilling the Vow Mudra (open palm extended downward, palm facing outward)</p>	<p>Fluency in The Three Tenets of a Zen Peacemaker. Deep understanding of:</p> <p>Not-Knowing: Emptiness</p> <p>Bearing Witness: Deep Listening and capacity for Internal and External awareness</p> <p>Action: Seeing the needs arise</p> <p>Activating the Bodhisattva Vow and other Vows</p>	<p>Bearing Witness Retreats</p>	<p>The Three Tenets Mala Bearing Witness Days & Retreats Vows Texts: Bearing Witness/ Glassman, The Vow-Powered Life/Bays</p>

THE PATHWAYS. Here is an attempt to make the current and proposed pathways specific.

Note: Transmission in Zen is face-to-face and is at the discernment of the primary teacher. Transmission marks the culmination of training and the beginning of discipleship. Transmission only occurs when a student and teacher are in complete harmony—this relationship is expected to deepen over time even as the student goes his or her own way. Without this connection, transmission should not be given. (i.e., not grad school)

Characteristics of the Pathways:

1. All-pervading paths or Thoroughness
2. Integrity throughout all of one’s life

THE PATHWAY	THE PATH
<p>1. The Teacher Pathway. Formal training culminates in Dharma Transmission, which empowers person as a fully independent Dharma Teacher. May or may not be a Koan Teacher. Can have their own students. Can train and empower someone to become a Dharma Teacher.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid long-term Teacher-student relationship • Embodiment of the Lineage • Study of the ZCLA Koan Curriculum (1,700 koans) • In-depth study of the Precepts • Demonstrated capacity and ability to lead students • Ability to give Dharma Talks and offer Dharma in public forums • Thorough understanding and training in Ethical behavior, power dynamics, psychological dynamics demonstrated by one’s conduct and how one handles conflicts in Sangha. • Demonstrates a thorough understanding of oneself • Study of Kirigami • Other:

THE PATHWAY	THE PATH
<p>2. The Preceptor Pathway. Formal training culminates in Preceptor Transmission, which empowers a person as a fully independent Preceptor who can teach the precepts, guide others in living the precepts, and give the Precepts for Jukai (not Tokudo unless one is also a Priest).</p> <p>Question: can this person give precepts at weddings or funerals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodied living of the Precepts and Ethical behavior • Solid Teacher-Student relationship • Deep study of the Precepts • Deep study of Kirigami • Ability to give Dharma Talks and offer Dharma in public forums • Demonstrated capacity and ability to guide students in precepts • Demonstrated ethical behavior • Demonstrates a thorough understanding of oneself • Recognized by others as an ethical person
<p>3. The Priest Pathway. Formal training culminates in Priest Transmission, which empowers a person as a fully independent priest who can offer pastoral counseling and care and also perform all ceremonies, jukai, tokudo, and weddings and funerals. This person can empower other people to be Priests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Teacher-Student relationship • Mastery of all Lineage Liturgy and Rituals both form and meaning • Demonstrated Capacity to Carry Rites of Passages • Demonstrated Capacity to Train others in Ritual and Ceremony • Demonstrated Capacity to offer Pastoral Counseling • Demonstrated Commitment to ZCLA Services • Demonstrated Capacity to Guide others in Personal Ceremony • Ability to give Dharma Talks and offer Dharma in public forums

THE PATHWAY	THE PATH
<p>4. The Mitra Pathway. Formal training culminates in Mitra Transmission, which empowers a person as a leader in the Sangha who exemplifies how to live the Bodhisattva Way. This person can empower other people to be Mitras.</p>	<p>This needs to be developed. The idea here is to create a Pathway for the “<i>mensch</i>”—the person who is a long-time, upstanding, practitioner of the Way and is not a Priest. However, this person could also be a Preceptor and/or a Dharma Teacher, but not necessarily. The Mitra is recognized as the solid bodhisattva that he or she is.</p>