

Preventing and Addressing Misconduct

Summary of Past Events and Reforms

As an organization, we acknowledge that great harm was committed in the past by the founding Abbot, Eido Shimano Roshi, involving abuses of power, including the centralization of power and inappropriate sexual relationships that occurred over the course of several decades.

We greatly regret this history; ZSS has made significant reforms and has put measures in place to prevent future misconduct. In the fall of 2010, ZSS held an open Sangha meeting under the guidance of the [Faith Trust Institute](#) to ensure transparency about events and to plan needed change. The Board required the resignation of both abbot Eido Shimano and his wife, who had been the director of the city temple. The Board also required that he abstain from any teaching relationship with students at either temple and not enter the premises of either temple. Pursuant to the recommendations of the Faith Institute, ZSS engaged An Olive Branch to conduct Board and sangha workshops and to further guide the Society. This resulted in an organizational restructuring, a shift in climate from secrecy to transparency, audited financial statements, revised [By-Laws](#) and the creation and posting of [Guidelines for Ethical Behavior](#) designed to ensure the safety and protection of students.

By-Laws

Highlights of the changes to the By-Laws are:

- Elimination of the position of CEO formerly held by the Abbot; prevention of current and future abbots from holding Board office.
- Limitation of terms for Directors; no Director can serve longer than six consecutive years.
- Provision for the Board to remove the Abbot if it deems the Abbot is unfit to carry out the duties of the position.
- Establishment of a Board Governance committee to ensure that future Directors do not deviate from the by-laws.
- Creation of an independent Ethics Committee composed of professionals in appropriate areas who are not members of the Board.

[Current ZSS By-Laws](#)

Ethics Policy

An ethics policy was created as a preventive measure against future misconduct. [The Guidelines for Ethical Behavior](#) are posted on the website and in the two temples to ensure easy access and adherence. The policy states that any person or observer can bring a complaint to any level from the temple director to the abbot, board, or Ethics Committee. The policy also includes a process for handling misconduct. It is reviewed and revised periodically with reference to current requirements and to reflect actual experience. Since its establishment, the Ethics Committee has received and addressed one complaint.

[Current Guidelines for Ethical Behavior](#)

Teachers and Training

In 2011, the spiritual and organizational leadership received board governance training by the [Faith Trust Institute](#) and An Olive Branch. An Olive Branch conducted workshops for different levels of leadership.

The current abbot, Chigan-kutsu Kyō-on Dokurō Jaeckel Roshi, has served as the Harvard Buddhist Chaplain for the last 13 years and was Buddhist Chaplain at Boston University before that. As a higher-education professional, he is Executive Director of the Office of Distance Education at Boston University.

Senior teacher Hokuto Daniel Diffin Osho received Dharma transmission from Shinge Roshi. He is a physician and long-time member of ZSS, who was a resident at Dai Bosatsu Zendo in the 1970's and the early 1980's and has served on the Board.

The clergy leadership is trained by formal instruction, modeling, and open communication under the supervision of the Abbot.

Clergy Responsibilities

Monastics and senior residents carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of managing the temples and supervising students. New York Zendo is led by a head monk who resides there with his family. He oversees the New York Zendo sangha committee, composed of students of various levels of seniority. Dai Bosatsu Zendo is directed by a head monk and other monastics in training and lay students in residence. All residents are required to engage in regular personal interviews with the Abbot. Clergy, residents, and lay students must abide by the [Guidelines for Ethical Behavior](#), and any apparent breach is investigated pursuant to the ethics policy.

Teaching Emphasis and Organizational Culture

Since 2011, there has been a significant shift in teaching emphasis and organizational culture at ZSS. The Abbot and Senior teacher are regularly involved in the teaching process, along with nine junior Dharma teachers and many senior students who give Dharma talks. This is in sharp contrast to the past, when the spiritual, organizational, and financial leadership was concentrated in a single individual and his spouse. The Board of Directors and the Ethics Committee are independent bodies with the ability to advise, consult, and respond to situational demands.

In her first "From the Abbot" article, published in the Spring 2011 ZSS newsletter, Abbess Emerita Shinge Roshi wrote, "There are changes that I envision. I want to cultivate an atmosphere that is harmonious, warm, open, and respectful of everyone. Since my way as a teacher is more relational than hierarchical, I look forward to sharing creative ideas with residents and visitors alike. I welcome past and current students with deep concern for continuing our heritage and love of the Dharma to take part in shaping the future of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. From time to time I would like to bring poets, artists, environmentalists, and other stimulating people to share what they do, and I would like to reach out to the wider Catskills community. These changes will evolve organically; they are not to be hurried, but they have begun. Supporting and encouraging each person's practice in appropriate ways, taking note of individual needs and talents: this is Rinzai Zen in an American setting. Snow and ice have melted; spring rains soak the earth, and the sun coaxes new buds to open. With the readiness of time, fruits form and ripen. Saturated with the incomparable practice of Buddha-Dharma, let us work together to realize the Great Way here at Dai Bosatsu Kongo-ji [and New York Zendo Shobo-ji]."

Abbot Chigan Roshi adds, "Ethical behavior is the foundation and actualization of spiritual practice, the manifestation of the path of the Bodhisattva in society. Our aspirations may be laudable and subscribe to the highest ideals, yet as individuals in this world, practitioners in the sangha, and members of society, we must support one another and hold each other accountable. Similarly, we must recognize the history of this organization and the overall challenges of human nature as they have manifested throughout humanity's history. As the current Abbot of the Zen Studies Society, I vow to foster transparency, clarity, and accountability in accordance with the fundamental precepts. Zen practice, which investigates our nature, the nature of this world, and our heart-mind, must encompass facing these topics with clarity and compassion."