

Cedar Rapids Zen Center – Jikyouji

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the CRZC Sangha and Board of Directors April 24, 2016

SANGHA MEETING

Present: President Eric Higgins-Freese, Treasurer Gina Vavra, Secretary Kelly Kruse, Resident Teacher Zuiko Redding, Clergy Representative Daishin McCabe, Brian Brandsmeier

Meeting called to order by President Eric Higgins-Freese at 10:37 AM.

COUNCIL was held.

MINUTES of April 3 – Motion to approve by Zuiko – Second by Daishin - Carries

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Middle Eastern Dinner – Sunday, May 1 at Islamic Center of Cedar Rapids

Sangha Meeting – Sunday, May 22nd after dharma talk

Interfaith Power & Light Prairie Woods Retreat – probably 4th Sunday in August (Zuiko might have a contact or two if they wanted to invite Native American groups.)

ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

- Eric nominates Gina – Second by Daishin – Carries
- Zuiko nominates Eric – Second by Daishin – Carries
- Zuiko nominates Daishin – Second by Eric – Carries

Meeting adjourned at 11:17 AM

Motion to adjourn by Zuiko – Second by Eric - Carries

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Present: President Eric Higgins-Freese, Treasurer Gina Vavra, Secretary Kelly Kruse, Resident Teacher Zuiko Redding, Clergy Representative Daishin McCabe, Brian Brandsmeier

Meeting called to order by President Eric Higgins-Freese at 11:24 AM.

ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES of April 21, 2015 – Motion to approve by Gina – Second by Eric - Carries

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion to elect Eric President and Gina Treasurer by Zuiko – Second by Daishin - Carries

PRACTICE REPORT – Zuiko Redding

Our mission is to promote Soto Zen practice by providing a welcoming place for zazen, spiritual practice, religious study, and community fellowship. It is also to support each other in living lives guided by zazen and manifested in the sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts.

We are fulfilling that mission well. We are a welcoming sangha, with members who take care of zazen, administration, grounds, and other work as part of their practice. We can congratulate ourselves on what we have become – a place where people can learn, experience, and practice the dharma with the support of

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others. We are a haven where people come and sit noon and evening, do baika, study dharma, and teach their children about the Buddha's practice. We are helping in our community. Our presence makes a difference.

We are not a large organization, but we are a grounded one. People are strong in their practice and serious about being awake in daily life. We work quietly in our community. I would like to see more people at sesshins and all-day sittings and perhaps that will happen in the future.

It's good to have Daishin McCabe, Jisho Siebert, and Shoryu Bradley associated with our center. Shoryu led October sesshin and will do so again this coming October. Jisho led the February all-day sitting and Daishin led March sesshin.

Attendance at zazen instruction and at 8:30 Sunday morning orientation is steady. Most hear about us on the web and a few from Facebook. The four-session course is still poorly attended but it does help people. Eric's care of the web page and Hoko's care of the Facebook page and the monthly newsletter have really helped make us visible in the community. Our weekly Facebook posts reach between 300 and 1,000 people and the monthly newsletter is mailed to 284 people and has an average 30% open rate.

Members are more willing to attempt the practice of being doan and jisha and filling other roles in the center. Kelly has ably taken over teaching the introductory evening. It would be good to have four or five doans – and also jishas – so people would not have to do it so often. We need someone to practice with work – leading work days and Sunday work periods and keeping tabs on the condition of the building and grounds. A great asset to our effort would be someone to work with publishing our paper newsletter. These duties need not take up much time. Being work leader would likely take a couple of hours a month on average. Putting the newsletter together takes three hours or so every three months. Taking on these things helps us deepen our practice.

Other practice is also doing well. The Hanshan study group has been going since February and people seem to want to go through the poems carefully, continuing until we are finished. Prof. Paul Rouzer came in February for a talk on Hanshan to begin our discussion. I hope to have a six-week study group at the end of the summer with Ashok Chawla of the Hindu community in which we look at relationships between the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Eric Higgins-Freese received the precepts on July 11. The baika group has three members and meets at 5:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays each month. We have unfortunately had to discontinue dharma school for a while, but it is there when the time is again right.

Our practice has also been visible in the community. Gina Vavra is our representative to the Inter-Religious Council and she read at this year's interfaith Thanksgiving service. Zuiko and others gave talks at schools, universities, and churches around the area. We are also involved with Iowa Interfaith Power and Light in working on sustainability issues, and we make regular contributions to the neighborhood Boys and Girls Club.

Prison practice is expanding. The sangha at Anamosa is small and steady. Zuiko, Tim Macejak and Tim Yukl rotate in sitting with the men on Sunday. Though the Mt. Pleasant Correctional Institution group is dormant at the moment, there is growing interest in other prisons. Zuiko will be visiting Ft. Dodge, Ft. Madison, and Newton in the next month to help the men organize practice. Daishin will be visiting Ft. Dodge and possibly Newton on an ongoing basis. Zuiko continues to be a resource for Clarinda, acting as a resource for the inmate who works with the group. We also sent books and corresponded with inmates at these places, and Zuiko continues to serve as the state prison chaplains' resource on Buddhism.

Around thirty people attended sitting and dharma talk when Zuiko and Gina visited the Bloomington-Normal group in April. There were thirteen people at the half-day sitting on Saturday. The group has a core of five members with another five or so who are more peripheral, and one of their members contributes sitting space in his martial arts studio. They seem to be setting down roots. Several people are interested in receiving the precepts.

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Zuiko's practice has been active, too. She is still a secretary and a board member of Sotoshu, and she continues to edit English translations for their web site. She is now on the Advisory Committee for Tenpyozan, a training monastery being built in California. She helped draft a national statement on climate change for the American Soto Zen community. Her dharma writings appear regularly in *Ancient Way*.

We are realizing our mission because of all of us. There is no Cedar Rapids Zen Center without sangha members with hearts of practice, willing to show up for zazen, talks, work, sesshin and other things. We have all worked shoulder-to-shoulder to build this practice. Let's be grateful to each other for making this a quiet place with a practice that welcomes and sustains everyone who comes. This center grows from our collected hearts and our effort together. It is actually us.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Eric Higgins-Freese – Review Strategic Plan

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Increased Participation

- Pay attention to signals from people that they are ready for more responsibility
- Job-shadowing during all-day/half-day sitting?

Retention

- We don't want to be the "church" that hounds
- Maybe try something more positive, like sending a "nice to see you" message if someone signs the guest book
- Daishin suggested emailing a short survey to people after they are here for the introductory evening

FACILITIES – MORE SPACE

- Sometimes a little cramped for Sesshin/visiting teachers. Specific needs?
- Nicer guest bedroom
- Basement – discussion space, or place to put sleeping bags, etc.

CENTER ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Assistant to Free Teacher Time – Nadine is awesome!

Establish Endowment – have already decided against

Fundraising Ideas

- Daishin – Mt. Equity has tiered "membership" amounts
- Currently, we let people get funds taken out of their bank accounts and they can be directed to different funds, with suggestion of how much to give if in-town, low-income, etc.
- Should donors' names be displayed somewhere, as is done in Japan?
- Have tried to get fundraising subcommittee going
- Maybe start talking about it more regularly at sangha meetings

TREASURER'S REPORT – Gina Vavra – See 2015 Financial Report for detailed analysis

Information about prison transportation fund is on Daishin's website

BUILDING AND GROUNDS REPORT – Zuiko Redding

House itself is in fine condition.

- A. Search for Work Leader: preferably someone who can attend work days and Sunday work period, communicating with Zuiko and others about pending tasks and projects.
- B. Projects COMPLETED: No major projects this year, just small ones
 1. Painting:
 - caulk and touch up windowsills downstairs – March, 2016
 - front and east side of porch fascia – at work days
 - front of house and porch washed – March, 2016
 - air-intake grill in zendo – March, 2016
 2. Kitchen sink area leak: repaired May 2014. Leaky pipe replaced
 3. Grounds:
 - moved hostas onto the slope in front to keep the soil in place. We will complete the project this summer.
 - using brick from the chimney to construct borders for the gardens in the back yard and additional landscaping. We've done two sides and expect to do two more
 - stump from old box elder taken down – October
 - need outdoor benches for garden
 4. Entry seating and coat area: Two benches were purchased to accommodate people in both the entry, and they can also be used in the zendo. The garment rack was removed and new coat hooks installed. Another set of hooks is awaiting installation.
- C. Projects PENDING:
 1. Basement sealing: Water seeps in around the floor and limestone walls are flaking. Zuiko will call contractors for estimates later this spring. Estimate we'll spend \$3,000 - \$4,000 but it will keep both the basement and the foundation safe.
 2. Painting: Needs in the following areas.
 - Interior, upstairs – woodwork and walls in office, Zuiko's room, parts of the library
 - Interior, downstairs – a few places where paint is cracking
 3. Water Damage in Stairwell: Have someone investigate to see if cause still exists before making plans to paint.
- D. Projects for the LONG-TERM:
 1. Roof: Should be replaced in four to five years
 2. Floors: Many need refinishing – upstairs hall, zendo, entry, discussion room, sun porch; need non-urethane finish due to salt in winter

ETHICS POLICIES & PROCEDURES VOTE

Discussion

- Some sanghas have problems with people's ability to be functioning board members with an authoritarian teacher
- SZBA publicizes the fact that you can go to them if teacher/prominent sangha member is the problem
- Gina – what do the bylaws say about fostering open communication?

Vote

- Motion to approve document with recent additions – Second by Eric – Carries
- Will put some copies in sangha drawer in discussion room, post one in the Center with a reference to the ones in the drawer, website, etc.

NEXT ANNUAL BOARD MEETING: April 30, 2017

Meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM

Motion to adjourn by Kelly – Second by Daishin – Carries

Respectfully submitted by Kelly Kruse