

## Still Mind Zendo

### Code of Ethical Conduct

March, 2022

In accordance with the guidelines offered by the White Plum AsAll who practice with Still Mind Zendo (SMZ) are asked to practice right conduct as part of their own development as Zen practitioners and as a way to ensure a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment for the practice of all sangha members.

Members of SMZ are guided by the following principles to help guide ethical conduct:

#### **I. The Bodhisattva Precepts as the Basis of Right Conduct**

*(adapted from the Zen Peacemaker Order)*

The grounds for right conduct are the sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts:

Taking refuge in the Buddha: awakening, oneness, not-knowing

Taking refuge in the dharma: learning

Taking refuge in the sangha: compassionate living in community

Ceasing from doing harm.

Doing good.

Doing good for others.

Not killing: *living in harmony with all of life and the environment that sustains it*

Not stealing: *being satisfied with what one has*

Not misusing sexuality: *giving and accepting love and friendship without clinging*

Not speaking falsehood: *speaking the truth and deceiving no one, including oneself*

Not giving or taking intoxicants: *cultivating a mind that sees clearly*

Not talking about others' faults: *accepting others as they are*

Not elevating oneself or blaming others: *owning one's limitations*

Not being stingy: *using and sharing all the ingredients of one's life*

Not being angry: *seeing things as they are and not as they should be*

Not speaking ill of the Three Treasures: *honoring the Enlightened Way*

#### **II. Inclusion and Non-discrimination**

*(adapted from ZCLA Statement of Right Conduct)*

SMZ is committed to providing a supportive environment for the practice of the Buddha Way. To this end, SMZ supports an environment free of harassment or discrimination. SMZ prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, or any other basis protected by federal or state law, or local ordinances applicable to nonprofit religious corporations. SMZ's anti-harassment policy

applies to all persons involved in the operation of SMZ and prohibits harassment by any teacher, practitioner, or student.

### **III. Practicing with Conflicts**

*(adapted from ZCLA Statement of Right Conduct)*

From the perspective of Zen practice, conflict presents an opportunity for personal growth and can function as an impetus for awakening and transformation. Interpersonal conflicts arise whenever there are sustained relationships, such as the ongoing relationships within the Sangha. Conflict, as used here, refers to unaddressed ongoing interpersonal disagreements, slights, and situations where oneself and others are negatively affected. All parties to a conflict are asked to engage in deep self-inquiry and to take the steps presented in the [SMZ Conflict and Complaint Resolution Guidelines](#) to address the situation in a timely manner.

### **IV. Refraining from Harmful Conduct**

*(adapted from ZCLA Statement of Right Conduct)*

All members of SMZ are asked to refrain from any harmful conduct such as malicious gossip, discrimination or harassment, inappropriate sexual relationships, bullying, and written, verbal or electronic abuse. All members will refrain from criminal conduct which violates local, state, or federal law.

### **V. Teachers' Responsibilities and Teacher-Student Relations**

*(adapted from the WPA Code of Ethical Conduct)*

1. **Confidentiality.** The relationship between student and teacher often involves the sharing of highly sensitive personal information. Respect for the student and for the relationship requires that teachers maintain such information in confidence. There may be occasions when, for the well-being of specific individuals and of the sangha, teachers may need to consult with other teachers or professionals concerning such confidences. On such occasions, teachers should strive to assure that such consultations are maintained in confidence and should inform the student in person and/or in writing of plans to seek a professional consultation. Despite the foregoing, if a teacher has reason to believe that a student has an intention to harm themselves or others, it is the responsibility of the teacher to inform the proper authorities as provided under applicable law. Each teacher also has an obligation to be aware of the applicable law with respect to reporting crimes disclosed during confidential communications.

2. **Power.** Teachers have an obligation to educate themselves about the subtle power issues that are inherent in the teacher/student relationship, as well as the potential effects of that power and its exercise on both teachers and others. Teachers should seek counsel from other teachers and professionals, as appropriate, about the use of power and the harmful effects caused by its

abuse. Teachers should also encourage their sanghas to offer training about such issues and their dynamics. Teachers should be especially aware of the potential for subtle abuse of power that may arise in relation to their personal interests.

**3. Right Speech.** Mutual respect is foundational for an environment supportive of sound practice. Such respect is manifested when sangha members treat others with dignity and engage others truthfully and compassionately with a positive intention. Sangha harmony is promoted when the teacher models, and all members observe, the clear mind precepts regarding right speech: refraining from lies, self-serving talk, slander, angry or abusive speech, and apportioning blame.

**4. Self-Awareness.** Teachers should aspire to constant clarity of mind. They therefore have an obligation to engage in self-monitoring and self-care. Occupying the role of teacher can subtly undermine a healthy sense of humility. In turn, a lack of humility can impair one's ability to recognize and live into the fullness of the responsibilities of being a teacher. For that reason, teachers should engage in activities that balance the teaching role with grounding in regular practice and study of the Dharma, leisure, engagement in family responsibilities, and the establishment of a relationship with another teacher with whom they can discuss and reflect on their work as teachers.

**5. Boundaries.** Teachers should not violate trust or use power and/or position for personal gain or self-satisfaction. The ultimate responsibility for maintaining appropriate and clear boundaries between teacher and student always rests with the teacher. When a teacher is asked to act in a capacity that calls for competencies beyond the teacher's expertise, he/she will refer students to those with requisite expertise (e.g., mental health professionals, medical professionals, legal professionals).

**6. Dual Relationships.** Although not all dual relationships are harmful to students or the sangha, they have a significant potential to complicate student/teacher relationships and to undermine sangha harmony. Teachers should be alert to maintain appropriate boundaries and carefully consider the implications and dangers of dual relationships. Examples of dual relationships include romantic relationships, financial relationships, intimate friendships, therapeutic relationships, and professional relationships. Some dual relationships are unavoidable and may be tolerated when managed well through transparency and discussion with sangha members. In the event that a teacher and a student wish to engage in a romantic relationship, the student is encouraged to consider seeking another teacher.

**7. Sexual Conduct.** Because sexual relations between a student and teacher have serious potential for the subtle and overt abuse of power, for disruption of the sangha, and for consequent harm to all individuals and institutions involved, they should be avoided unless the teacher and a student are in a committed and publicly transparent relationship with each other. If a teacher and a student enter a sexual relationship, they should openly declare their relationship to the sangha. The teacher, student, and sangha should then strive for ongoing

openness, particularly as respects the potential for this relationship might cause disruption within the sangha. The teacher has the ultimate obligation to assure that these guidelines are observed.

**8. Sangha Code of Ethical Conduct.** Teachers will ensure that information about both the individual sangha code and processes for complaint resolution and those of the White Plum Asanga are made known within their sanghas.

**9. Processes.** To ensure openness within the sangha, teachers and students will engage in processes, such as council, whenever needed, to address ethical issues.

**10. Collegial Respect.** When a student requests to study with a teacher, the teacher should inquire whether the student has been studying with another teacher and if this is the case, encourage closure wherever possible. When a student changes teachers, the new teacher shall comply with the WPA guidelines for such changes, which are attached. Teachers will not actively recruit students from other teachers. (see addendum for the WPA changing teacher policy)

**11. Accountability and Governance.** Maintaining the well-being of the sangha is the mutual responsibility of all members and requires active participation in governance by members. Teachers will support the sangha's chosen governance structure and will act to further the goals of accountability and transparency in all areas, including finances, decision-making, and consideration of grievances, including allegations of ethical misconduct.

**12. Transparency.** Transparency is crucial to maintain balance and harmony within the sangha. Teachers will be alert to potential conflicts of interest with students and other members of the sangha and will act so as to avoid them, and any material conflicts of interest will be disclosed to sangha leadership immediately.

#### **VI. Conflict and Complaint Resolution**

We are committed to working through conflicts and difficulties that arise from violations of right conduct. Sangha members who bring conflicts or complaints concerning the conduct of any SMZ member to be addressed through our resolution process will not be subject to reprisal in any form and will be expected to participate in the resolution process. Please see the [SMZ Conflict and Complaint Resolution Guidelines](#).

*Approved by the Still Mind Zendo Board of Directors, March 2022*