

Eugene Zendo Ethics Guidelines (Working Draft)

The Eugene Zendo provides an environment and programs for Buddhist training and practice. The Sangha (community of participants) relates with one another on the basis of compassion, mutual respect, and inclusivity. The commitment of our Sangha is to support each participant's spiritual practice and to maintain an environment that is conducive to this practice.

The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts

The Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts represent our aspiration in practice to live an ethical life. Their challenge lies in the place of practice that harmonizes both their literal as well as their ultimate meaning. Thus the precepts must be lived out moment to moment from a sincere heart rather than become rigid measures of right and wrong. Taking refuge in the Sangha, we rely on our collective wisdom to fully meet a wide array of situations. As an organization, we wish to offer the dharma freely to all without discrimination and ensure the safety of our members. We expect those in positions of authority to act ethically and for members to treat each other with respect. Our aspiration and practice is to cultivate lives that are an expression of the following Precepts:

The Three Refuges:

Refuge in Buddha, refuge in Dharma, and refuge in Sangha.

The Three Pure Precepts:

1. Embracing codes and forms.
2. Embracing good dharmas.
3. Embracing living beings.

The Ten Grave Precepts:

1. Not killing.
2. Not stealing.
3. Not misusing sexuality.
4. Not speaking falsely.
5. Not dealing in intoxicants.
6. Not discussing faults.
7. Not praising self and criticizing others.
8. Not being stingy with dharma or wealth.
9. Not being angry.
10. Not disparaging the three treasures.

Upholding the Mission of the Eugene Zendo

In order to protect and nurture the Eugene Zendo as a place for sincere practice and spiritual cultivation, the head teacher is entrusted with the responsibility to uphold the mission of the temple in all decisions related to temple programs, projects, and the use of facilities and assets. These Ethical Guidelines elaborate on the guidance provided by the precepts through focus on aspects of conduct within the Sangha that require special awareness in order to maintain a practice environment that is safe, harmonious, and free from needless distraction. The dimensions of Sangha relations addressed in this statement include: mindful speech and action, the boundaries of the teacher/student relationship, confidentiality, and appropriate use of power and position.

In order to provide the Sangha with an individual who can be consulted on ethical matters, the Head Teacher will appoint an Ethical Designee. This appointment will be for one year and will

automatically renew unless terminated by the Head Teacher or Ethical Designee. To address situations involving grievances between individuals, we have established a separate Reconciliation Council, detailed below, which consists of four members appointed by the Board.

Mindful Speech and Action

A respectful and compassionate standard of behavior, based on mindfulness in speech and action, is expected from everyone who participates in Eugene Zendo activities. This is based on a fundamental respect for each person's unique expression of Buddha Nature, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic background, appearance, sexual orientation, or physical disability.

Right speech—refraining from lies, gossip (self-serving talk), slander, apportioning blame, and angry or abusive speech—is central in practicing this compassionate standard of behavior.

Right action—refraining from behavior that is harmful or destructive to self or others, including any form of physical violence, emotional coercion, sexual misconduct or harassment, drug or substance abuse.

Teacher / Student Relationships

The teacher student relationship is founded on deep trust and respect that is the mutual responsibility of both parties to honor. However, the authority of the teacher carries with it an increased responsibility to avoid situations and actions that could result in harm to the student, the community or themselves. We recognize that harm may result if one vested with teaching authority and a student become sexually or inappropriately emotionally involved, or if a teacher violates trust, or uses power or position for personal ends.

At the Eugene Zendo, a teacher must make a commitment to conduct relationships in accord with the Bodhisattva precepts. Because of this commitment, the responsibility for maintaining appropriate and clear boundaries always rests with the teacher. He/she will respect and protect the personal autonomy of all students, and refrain from sexual involvement with students. Should a teacher feel unable to uphold this standard, it is expected that he/she will seek guidance and counsel from his/her teacher, the Ethical Designee, or a senior teacher from the broader community. It is recommended that the student involved also do so. If a teacher nevertheless maintains an interest in a sexual relationship with a Sangha member, a process may be initiated to determine if changes in his/her role in the community are necessary.

Confidentiality

In a small and intimate community such as ours, it is common for members to share sensitive personal information in the course of exploring the Dharma. To foster an environment of trust and truthful communication, it is the responsibility of all Sangha members to hold personal communications with respect, since personal information offered at group meetings, practice events or Sangha gatherings is not confidential.

Matters discussed in individual meetings with the teacher are kept in confidence when confidentiality is requested and agreed to, except as may be required by law. Students are encouraged not to engage in idle talk about matters discussed in teacher-student meetings. There may be circumstances in which it is necessary for a teacher to consult a professional for legal or psychological expertise. It may be necessary to disclose confidential information in the context of such a consultation. Such consultations are also kept in confidence and are only undertaken in the interest of the Sangha and the student.

Use of Power and Position

Individuals in positions of confidence or trust must not misuse status or authority to achieve privileges or other consideration, or to inappropriately influence others.

Individuals who are entrusted with handling funds or assets bear responsibility to provide accountable stewardship. It is not appropriate for anyone to use his or her relationship to the Temple for personal gain or status.

Eugene Zendo Reconciliation Council

Conflict naturally arises in our everyday lives and is common within any organization. As the Eugene Zendo grows, in order to fully engage our practice, as a Sangha we are developing ways to address difficulties and grievances involving individuals, with the organization or ethical violations as a means to support harmony in the community. It is our intention to look at these difficulties as an opportunity to practice as Buddhists who wish to develop wisdom and compassion as we learn to function together as a group.

What is the Reconciliation Council?

The reconciliation council is a group of 4 members appointed by the board. Its purpose is to develop and review guidelines for grievance procedures as well facilitate the process of conflict resolution.

What if I Have a Conflict?

For conflicts between individuals, before proceeding, we encourage a period of introspection to consider one's interpretation of events, one's possible contribution to the situation as well as unmet expectations. You may wish to ask the supportive help of a Sangha member, council member or the priest to help reflect on the situation. This is not to discourage coming forward with a conflict, or avoid confrontation, but to make it a true opportunity to look deeply into the nature of the experience and pave the way for learning for all parties involved. This alone may help resolve the difficulty.

If you are still experiencing difficulty, you can meet with a council member or the whole council. They can help explore the problem and suggest agreeable avenues for proceeding. The meeting would be held confidential within the reconciliation council membership. However, in the event of a serious ethical violation the council may need to consult the board of directors. Sincere care will be taken to protect the interests of all parties involved.

The council may make any number of recommendations for proceeding with a difficulty. They can also help facilitate meetings between parties in conflict to work towards resolution in a manner that will vary with each situation. Although the council can make suggestions, its authority lies in facilitating resolution. Any organizational decisions regarding the Eugene Zendo would be made by its board of directors.

Council Membership

Carmelita Thomson 345-9051 carmel@efn.org

Issei Weil 514-1214 rjweil@yahoo.com

Aido Waskow 338-8453 karenwaskow@yahoo.com

Thelma Soderquist 344-4222 robidoux@efn.org