

June 21, 2013

Dear Sangha,

Many of us participated in the Sangha Weekend facilitated by An Olive Branch in 2011. As a result of doing that work together, in an atmosphere that emphasized openness, deep listening, and mutual respect, we became aware that so much had been hidden in the past. No one was ever able to put a stop to what should have been stopped because of the culture of secrecy and the misuse of power. We, the Board of Directors of the Zen Studies Society, acknowledge this, and we are deeply sorry.

At that time, even though all of us wanted to find a way to do so, we were not able to offer an organizational apology, because of legal constraints having to do with confidentiality. We were and continue to be especially concerned about those who were directly harmed by inappropriate sexual relationships with their teacher, but we also know that many others were deeply hurt.

We want to continue the process we began that weekend. We uphold the intention expressed in Shinge Roshi's recent letter calling for an annual day of introspection, atonement, and purification at the end of Anniversary Sesshin, which this year will occur on July 6. Please join us that day, even if you cannot come for sesshin.

In addition, we have been in touch with the Rev. Alan Newton, a Restorative Justice facilitator from the Partners in Restorative Initiatives (PIRI) in Rochester, NY, to plan an open forum later this year at a neutral site, since for many of those harmed, meeting at a ZSS temple is still emotionally fraught.

Restorative Justice provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationships affected by misconduct and misuse of power. It recognizes that atonement and repairing of harm must focus on the injuries, needs, and responsibilities of everyone involved.

Our wish is to listen with open hearts, and to benefit from everyone's ideas.

Gassho,

Hokuto Dan Diffin, President; Shoteki Chris Phelan, Vice President;
Shinkon Peter Glynn, Treasurer; Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz, Secretary; Tamon Jeffrey Hovden, and Genno Linda King

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