

# Right Conduct Guidelines for Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Centers

## Draft (4.0) | May 2016

*To take refuge in the Sangha means to respect harmony as the basis of human society, to depend on it, to devote ourselves to it, and to realize it.*

We offer the following in the spirit of commitment to a community of practice based on trust, respect, and true communication. Part One names five Buddhist sila and four general policies. Part Two outlines specific mechanisms for addressing grievances and moving toward reconciliation. Part Three describes a process through which this document can be amended.

### Part One. Right Conduct

#### Introduction: Five Precepts

These guidelines incorporate the five Buddhist precepts as a code of conduct which affirms a commitment to harmony and self-restraint that is fundamental to our community of practice. As general guidelines the precepts help to create a welcoming and supportive environment for practice and for all relationships we make in that context. While we observe the precepts as a code of conduct, our practice aims to understand them through our own experience and insight. It is each person's responsibility to observe and respect the following:

- We embrace the mind of compassion—we refrain from killing or being ruled by violence.
- We respect the property of others—we refrain from taking what is not given.
- We are conscious and loving in relationships—we refrain from being ruled by lust.
- We practice truthful speech—we refrain from words and actions that are deceitful.
- We exercise proper care of our body and mind—we refrain from abuse of intoxicants.

#### General Considerations

While recognizing that it is not feasible to address every potential ethical issue, Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Centers state clear policy in relation to actions that are deemed especially likely to disrupt the community of practice.

*Mindful Speech.* In a small community great harm can come from speech that is inconsistent with the precepts. Mutual respect and trust are built when all sangha members speak truthfully and compassionately with the intent to be

helpful, and observe the precepts regarding right speech: refraining from lies, gossip (self-serving talk), slander, angry or abusive speech, and careless assigning of blame.

*Equality of women and men.* RJ/MB Zen Centers are committed to providing a practice environment which respects the experience, understanding, position and responsibility of women and men as equal. We make a specific commitment to honoring the practice experiences of women so that these are not ignored, or spoken for by others.

*Sexual-harassment Policy.* Sexual harassment can consist of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is unwelcome. Continued expression of sexual interest directed at another RJ/MB Zen Center member or visitor to RJZC/MBZC after being informed that such interest is unwelcome, or in a manner that is offensive, is a misuse of sexuality.

*Non-Discrimination Policy.* RJ/MB Zen Centers are committed to promoting and maintaining an open and diverse community. Any disrespectful discriminatory or preferential treatment of others on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, disability, income, ethnicity, or national origin is a violation of the Right Conduct Guidelines for RJ/MB Zen Centers.

## **Part Two. Ethics and Reconciliation Council (ERC)**

### Addressing Concerns and Grievances about Misconduct

The Ethics and Reconciliation Council (ERC) is a group of three or more individuals, named by the Rinzai-ji & Mount Baldy Boards. The function of the ERC is to hear issues and guide processes that relate to conduct, ethics, or both. (As of April 2016, two appendices are in preparation that offer guidance for this work: "Active Listening" and "Listening Council Practice.") Anyone having such concerns will be directed to the ERC. (Names of the current members appear at the close of this document.)

If an individual has concerns about how they are being treated by another member of the community or if they have concerns about another member's ethical conduct within the community, they are encouraged to have a direct conversation with that person to address these concerns, provide feedback and reach agreement about needed changes.

If an individual chooses not to speak directly with the person who is the source of concern, or if speaking with that person has not resolved the concern, the individual with the concern is encouraged to contact a member of the Ethics and Reconciliation Council (ERC). The ERC member will listen and, if invited to respond, offer his or her perspective.

The ERC member and the individual with the concern would then enter into dialog with the objective of arriving at workable resolution of the grievance. As either the ERC member or the concerned individual may recommend, that dialog could include the person in relation to whom the concern is being voiced.

#### Procedures for Filing a Formal Grievance

If a workable resolution does not emerge from dialog, an individual may wish to submit a formal written grievance. The written grievance will include pertinent details and a concise description of previous attempts to arrive at a workable resolution. The author submits the grievance, with signature and date, to a member of the ERC who immediately forwards it to the other members. The ERC will convene and call upon two members who will:

1. Bring the grievance to the attention of appropriate board/s and administrative staff.
2. Listen to the account of the individual, repeating back what they have understood the individual to say, and then asking if their understanding is correct.
3. Seek out and listen to the account of the person(s) cited by the individual in the grievance. Here again, repeating back what they have understood the individual to say, then asking if their understanding is correct.
4. Develop a narrative timeline as an accompanying document for the grievance, notifying any party who is mentioned within the timeline.
5. Convey the written grievance together with narrative timeline to the full ERC. The ERC will arrive at a recommendation in a timely manner, using the tools of council practice.
6. The recommendation will be communicated to both the author and the subject of the grievance. As deemed appropriate, the recommendation will also be communicated to the appropriate board/s and administrative staff.

In the case that the individual bringing forth the grievance finds the outcome of the procedure to be unsatisfactory, he or she can request that an intermediary (such as a mediator or health services provider with specialization in trauma work) be retained to facilitate the process. The ERC will forward the request for an intermediary, together with a recommendation based on its understanding of the circumstances of the grievance, to the appropriate board president/s. The board/s would then deliberate and draft a response to the request. In general, the board/s would communicate any response to the individual through the ERC.

#### Additional responsibilities of the ERC

- Follow-up with communications to the Rinzai-ji & Mount Baldy Zen Center Boards and with the Members and Sangha as appropriate.
- Submit an annual report to the Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Center Boards to ensure transparency and fairness.
- Provide mentorship of new members to ensure continuity and effectiveness.
- Keep written records of all proceedings for a period of not less than ten years.

### **Part Three. Procedure for modification**

Anyone may submit suggestions for modifying these guidelines to the Ethics and Reconciliation Council. The ERC forwards any such suggestions to the Boards with a recommendation to 1) adopt the suggestion, 2) adopt a modified version of the suggestion, 3) respectfully decline to adopt the suggestion. In any of the three possible outcomes, the Boards will draft and communicate a written response to the author of the suggestion.

### **Ethics and Reconciliation Council**

As of July 2015, members of the Ethics and Reconciliation Council (ERC) of Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Centers are: Elisa Atwill, Ginsei Ginger Calloway, Seido Larry Clark, Myokyo Judith McClean.

#### **Document History**

- First draft approved, June 2015, Boards of Directors of Rinzai-ji & Mount Baldy Zen Centers
- Second draft approved, July 2015, Boards of Directors of Rinzai-ji & Mount Baldy Zen Centers
- Second draft formally adopted, January 2016 by Boards of Directors of Rinzai-ji & Mount Baldy Zen Centers
- Third and fourth drafts proposed for review in advance of posting and distribution, April & May 2016

#### Opening Quote

*Shakyamuni Buddha: A Narrative Biography* by Nikkyo Niyano (1980), pg 68.