

Subject: Precepts for Right Conduct

8 September 2011

Dear Members and Friends of ZCB/Clare Sangha,

In its May meeting this year, the White Plum Asanga of Zen teachers took up the topic of right conduct. A policy statement was prepared and posted on June 2, 2011. The first paragraph of the policy reads as follows:

“The White Plum Asanga affirms integrity, honesty, and humility as central to the practice of our Dharma teaching. We affirm non-harming in our relations with all those whom we encounter. We collectively vow to maintain our lineage as a vital branch of the Dharma tree, and to keep it as clear as possible from harmful actions.”

The WPA statement goes on to note the harmful impact of abusive misconduct – in the areas of sex, alcohol, power and money – that has sometimes occurred in the White Plum lineage. (Please see the WPA website announcements page – www.whiteplum.org – for the full policy statement.) The May meeting also took account of abusive misconduct and its recent, harmful impact among Zen teachers, sanghas and their organizational structures in other lineages.

The WPA has encouraged members to supplement its policy statement with follow-on guidance to their own sanghas to help protect against the type of abusive misconduct and negative experience cited in the WPA announcement. So it is, based on consultation with other White Plum sanghas – in keeping with the values of integrity, honesty, humility and non-harming – the board of directors approves the following statement of policy and guidelines for sangha conduct:

The Zen Community of Baltimore/Clare Sangha (ZCB) is a lay sangha established to transmit the practice and training of Zen. To this end, and to promote sangha harmony – including integrity in the process of helping members realize and manifest their awakened nature – we support a policy that embodies standards for and limitations on behavior.

Members of the sangha, especially senior members, have a responsibility to maintain a healthy environment for the community and our practice/training. We thus join with other Zen communities and affirm our commitment to right conduct by endorsing the following precepts:

1. We take up the precept of non-harming.

In undertaking this precept, we acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We agree to refrain from aggressive violence and to continually refine our understanding of non-harming in all our actions.

2. We take up the precept of refraining from stealing.

We agree not to take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property of others. We agree to be honest in our dealings with money and not to misappropriate or misuse money committed to the sangha. We agree to bring awareness to the gifts of the earth's resources and to use them in a respectful and ecological manner.

3. We take up the precept of refraining from false speech.

We agree to speak in a way that is honest, beneficial, kind and considerate. We will endeavor to refrain from gossip and deceit in our community and to maintain transparency in our activities. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication, with the qualities of loving-kindness and compassion as the basis of our speech.

4. We take up the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct.

We agree to avoid creating harm through sexuality and to avoid sexual exploitation. Those married will honor their vows and refrain from adultery. Those with vows of celibacy will live according to their vows. All teachers agree not to exploit their authority and position in order to assume a sexual relationship with a student.

5. We take up the precept of not misusing drugs or alcohol.

It is clear that substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time.

Board of Directors

www.zbcclaresangha.org