

# AZC Ethics Policy

Adopted by the Board of Directors  
September 22, 2018

## **Ethical Conduct and Precepts**

AZC is committed to being a safe and inclusive place for spiritual practice. All members are expected and empowered to ensure that this is always the case. We are committed to create and sustain an environment where people can engage wholeheartedly and completely without fear or distraction, and where Zen teaching and practice is at the core of what we do.

We are clear that any sexual relationship between a teacher, or any other person in a position of power, and his or her student is inappropriate and unacceptable. We are committed to identifying and understanding sexual misconduct and to empower our Sangha members and teachers to respond compassionately and appropriately should an issue of this nature be brought to their attention.

We also recognize the great harm created by gossip, innuendo, rumors, retaliation, intimidation, mistreatment of others, and other forms of unethical behavior generated by anyone and directed towards any member. We recognize that a breach of ethics is at the root of misconduct and that everyone is accountable for his or her behavior.

All AZC teachers and members are fully aware of the ethical standards expected of them and have wholeheartedly and without reservation agreed to live by these standards.

Our Statement of Ethical Conduct and Precepts details the expectations we have for our teachers and all members, and our Complaint Resolution

Procedure outlines the steps to be taken by anyone who feels that a breach of ethics has occurred.

### **Statement of Ethical Conduct and Precepts**

The Precepts serve as our guide along the path of right speech, right conduct, and appropriate relationships. Practice is based on trust, safety, respect, and truthful communication.

#### **I. PREAMBLE**

Albuquerque Zen Center (AZC) is committed to provide the teaching and practice of Zen Buddhism. These guidelines are meant to establish reasonable expectations and limitations for the conduct of members, officers, and ordained staff at AZC.

Traditionally, the Buddhist Sangha had a set of rules or precepts to govern ethical behavior and interactions. In the past, the emphasis was on monastic living, and the Vinaya rules reflected that emphasis. Today the emphasis is on implementing those rules in an urban Zen Center environment. Those who go through ordination studies and processes take all sixteen Precepts as a vow of intention upon entering the Buddha Way. These Precepts set out a basic set of ethical standards in which each of us conduct both our personal practice and our interpersonal relationships with all sentient beings.

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#### **II. PRECEPTUAL BASIS OF CONDUCT AS APPLIED TO:**

A. Members: Those who have joined the Sangha by attendance, pledge or other forms of recognition.

B. Officers: Either elected, appointed, or volunteer positions, including committees and staff.

C. Initiated Members: Members who have taken the precepts through lay ordination.

D. Priests and/or Monks and Nuns: Ordained members of this Sangha, authorized by the Abbott of the Center.

We ask that all Sangha Members be aware of the Precepts; that all endeavor to keep the Precepts as a life style; and that all commit themselves to bringing the Precepts to the fore in their daily activity.

#### THE THREE REFUGES

Take refuge in the Buddha

Take refuge in the Dharma

Take refuge in our Sangha

#### THE THREE PURE PRECEPTS

Cease from evil

Do only good

Do good for others

#### THE TEN GREAT PRECEPTS

##### Do Not Kill

In undertaking this precept we acknowledge the interconnection of all beings and our respect for all life. We agree to refine our understanding of not killing and non-harming in all our actions. We will seek to understand the implications of this precept in such difficult areas as abortion, euthanasia, the consuming of animals, and the killing of pests.

##### Do Not Steal

We agree to not take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property of others. We agree to bring consciousness to the use of all the earth's resources in a respectful and ecological way. We agree to be honest in our dealing with money and not to misappropriate money committed to dharma projects. We agree to offer teachings without favoritism in regard to members financial circumstances.

### Do Not Misuse Sexuality

We agree to avoid creating harm through sexuality and to avoid sexual exploitation or adultery. All teachers and ordained staff agree not to use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position in order to assume a sexual relationship with a member. Any sexual relationship, consenting or otherwise, between an ordained Member of the Center and any member is strictly forbidden.

### Do Not Say That Which Is Not True

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip in our community. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication and to cultivate the quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech.

### Do Not Cloud the Mind or Abuse Intoxicants

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

### Do Not Speak Against Others

Do Not Be Proud of Yourself and Devalue Others

Do Not Be Mean-Spirited in Giving Dharma or Wealth

Do Not Be Angry (Indulge Anger)

Do Not Defame the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

## **III. CANONS OF CONDUCT**

These canons are applicable to anyone vested with authority to teach or serve, especially in one-on-one relationships, and also apply to the interpersonal conduct and relationship of all Sangha members. Unlike precepts, which are imperative guides to our behavior and are a source of ethical consideration, these canons require mandatory compliance. Please address concerns with these canons and guidelines with the Complaints Resolution Procedure detailed below.

## CANON 1

Priests, Monks and Nuns, and members shall uphold the integrity of the Albuquerque Zen Center, and the teachings of the Buddha and all of our Ancestors, and the Sangha at large at all times and in all places.

## CANON 2

Everyone subject to these canons shall endeavor to treat all others, whether Members or not, with utmost respect for their privacy, personal views, and lifestyle choices, in accord with all of the teachings of the Buddha and the Ancestors.

## CANON 3

Priests, officers, Monks, Nuns, and Board members shall perform the duties of their office impartially and diligently.

## CANON 4

Information revealed by any person to any Priest, Monk, Nun or Initiated Member is subject to a claim of legal privilege. Priests, monks and nuns must not reveal any confidential information or disclosures made by any of their students, or Members, except where these disclosures are authorized by the student or Member or are required by law, or which allege violations of federal, state or other laws. Confidential information are those disclosures of a personal nature that contain details regarding one's private life and relationships that are revealed in a "one-on-one" conference in a closed room or in a private conversation not overheard by anyone else. Personal information that is discussed by any party in any other, non-privileged circumstances are no longer privileged in the legal sense, but the communication should still be treated with discretion.

## CANON 5

No student or Member shall be required to give money or services to any individual. No student or Member shall be required to give money in excess of their regular membership pledge. No student or Member shall be required to give time or labor that the student or Member deems to be detrimental to his or her needs. This does not prohibit the exchange of money or services for value received, i.e., professional services provided by one Member to another, payment for retreats, or any special event at the AZC.

## CANON 6

A sexual relationship is never appropriate between Buddhist teachers and their students. It is a violation of these canons for a teacher, priest or monk or nun who has a one-on-one teacher-student relationship with a student or Sangha member to have a sexual relationship with that student/Sangha member. Similarly, a sexual relationship while there is a teacher student relationship between ordained staff is also strictly forbidden.

## CANON 7

All interpersonal relationships between any and all Members of the AZC shall be guided by the Precepts as detailed above. Members should at all times strive to live in accord with those precepts. As such, we should recognize that behaviors such as gossiping, and failure to engage in Right Speech as well as all parts of the Noble Eight-fold Path, are detrimental to the Sangha and our individual practice and are to be avoided.

## **VII: Complaint Resolution Procedure**

In the course of daily Sangha interactions, disagreements, conflicts, misunderstandings and unethical behavior can occur. AZC is committed to finding wise ways to address those concerns. The health of our Sangha is measured by our ability to accept that concerns will arise and that we can embrace compassionate means of addressing and resolving conflicts. When a

direct, responsible conversation between two parties is not possible, the Ethics Committee is committed to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion either through an informal or formal conflict resolution process.

A Sangha Member is encouraged to discuss any possible violations of the above canons or any perceived violation of any ethical conduct and precepts promptly and directly. Complaints should be made in writing to the Ethics Committee.

Any AZC body or individual charged under the policy below with receiving a complaint should respond in writing to the Ethics Committee within thirty days.

The Ethics Committee will then respond to the person who submitted the originating complaint.

#### 1. About the Abbot:

- a. If the complaint is about the Abbott, the complaint shall go directly to the President of the Board. The President shall work with a member of the Ethics Committee and the parties in an effort to resolve that matter.
- b. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level, the matter will be brought to the full Board who at their discretion may involve other resources available both within the Sangha and external to the Sangha.
- c. If the matter is not resolved to the full satisfaction of the Board, the complaining Member, and the Abbot, the Board may impose any action available under this policy.

#### 2. About Sangha Member:

- a. If the complaint is about a Member of the Sangha who is not in a teaching capacity or other position of authority, the individual may try to resolve it with the fellow Sangha Member first.
- b. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level, the Sangha Member is encouraged to request involvement by any Member, Priest, Monk or Nun or Board member within the Sangha.
- c. If the complaint appears unresolvable to both, the issue should be brought to the Abbott's attention, who will attempt to deal appropriately and humanely with

the issue or concern. The Abbot will make a decision after either reviewing pertinent data and/or meeting with the parties involved resolving the conflict.

3. About officer, Priest, Monk or Nun:

a. If the complaint is about an officer, Priest, Monk or Nun, direct communication should be tried first, either alone with the individual or with a third person present.

b. When there is an issue among two officers, Priests, Monks or Nuns that appears unresolvable to both, the issue should be brought to the Abbot's attention, who will attempt to deal appropriately and humanely with the issue or concern. The Abbot will make a decision after either reviewing pertinent data and/or meeting with the parties involved.

4. About a Board Member, a Board committee, or the Board as a whole:

a. If the complaint is about a Board member, board committee or the Board, the complaint should be brought to the Board President. If the complaint is about the Board President it should be brought to any other Board member. The Board will make a decision after either reviewing pertinent data and/or meeting with the parties involved with the conflict. The Board or the complainant may request the support of a neutral party.

5. Annual Disclosure:

The Abbott and the Board President will report to the Board at least annually on the nature, number, and outcome of complaints received.

6. Disclosure to the Sangha:

In circumstances where serious harm has been done by a Sangha Member, or where the potential for serious harm is evident from the previous actions of a Sangha Member, it may be beneficial for the Board to inform the entire Sangha. Any disclosure of misconduct to the entire Sangha will be made by the Board President following a vote of the entire Board of Directors.

This policy and any other set of guidelines will be distributed to the full AZC Sangha on an annual basis and will be available in such an appropriate manner and place as the AZC website and in the collected records of Board meetings.