

# Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines Regarding Religious Authorization of Members in the Zenwest Buddhist Society

**Approved by:** Zenwest Buddhist Society (formerly Victoria Zen Centre Society) Practice Council

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## Preamble

The Zenwest Buddhist Society (“Zenwest”) is a religious organization that provides a range of spiritual services to its members and to the broader community. To promote individual and organizational accountability, opportunities for members’ spiritual growth and development, and harmonious functioning of the sangha, within Zenwest there are various religious positions that qualified members may hold. Each position has specific associated sangha responsibilities and elements of form (e.g., robes); some positions include authority to perform spiritual ceremonies and/or to teach as a representative of Zenwest.

## Policy

### Applicability

1. This policy applies to all individuals who are defined as Zenwest members according to the Bylaws of Zenwest.
2. Procedures regarding complaint apply to any member of the public who has a concern about the functioning of the performance of religious duties by a Zenwest member.

### Principles

3. The religious positions within Zenwest confirm which members of Zenwest are authorized to perform spiritual functions on behalf of Zenwest.

4. All persons entrusted with authority by Zenwest have an obligation to ensure that there is no misuse of that authority in any action or relationship.
5. Zenwest recognizes its responsibility to:
  - a. promote harmonious functioning of the sangha with respect to performance of religious duties;
  - b. ensure that members providing spiritual services on behalf of Zenwest are appropriately screened, trained, and supervised;
  - c. respond fairly, equitably, and in a timely manner to complaints regarding Zenwest members' performance of religious duties.
6. Zenwest affirms the right of every individual to be treated with dignity and respect, and to practice in an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse.
7. Decisions regarding religious authorization shall be consistent with Zenwest policies regarding conflict of interest, privacy and confidentiality, and Zenwest member rights and responsibilities; with generally accepted professional ethics; and with any applicable legislation.
8. Zenwest prohibits reprisal or threats of reprisal against any individual who makes use of this policy or participates in proceedings held under its jurisdiction. Any individual or body found to be making such reprisals or threats will be subject to disciplinary action.

## Definitions

9. As described in the Bylaws of Zenwest, the Zenwest Practice Council is a committee comprised of (a) the Zenwest Abbot/Abbess, and (b) Zenwest members in good standing who have completed the Jukai Ceremony ("receiving the precepts") and have thereafter been authorized by the Practice Council to hold a seat on the Practice Council.
10. The Zenwest Practice Council has the authority to:
  - a. confer spiritual titles, ranks, and positions upon members of Zenwest;
  - b. determine processes for supervision of Practice Council members in the performance of their religious duties; and
  - c. take corrective action to address conflicts relating to Practice Council members' religious responsibilities.
11. The religious positions within Zenwest are:
  - a. Lay Practitioner
    - Lay Member
    - Practice Council Member
    - Elder
    - Junior Lay Teacher
    - Lay Teacher
  - b. Monk
    - Novice
    - Junior
    - Priest
  - c. Senior Priest
    - Teacher

- Great Teacher
- Master Teacher

Specific responsibilities associated with each position are described in Appendix A (“Training Guideline”).

12. Although titles and authority associated with religious positions within Zenwest may be removed by Zenwest, the vows and spiritual competencies associated with each position are individual commitments that can only be renounced by the member, and that cannot be removed by Zenwest or any other institution.

### **Eligibility**

13. The basic guidelines for each position are outlined in Appendix A (“Training Guideline”).
14. The Practice Council may determine that a particular exceptional candidate should be considered for a particular position in spite of not meeting the established basic guideline for that position.

### **Assurance of Fair Treatment**

15. Zenwest affirms that the Practice Council shall make its decisions regarding appointment to a religious position in a fair and equitable manner.
16. Zenwest affirms that all individuals involved in conflicts or disputes regarding religious authorization are to be treated in a fair and equitable manner.

## **Procedures**

### **Requesting an Authorized Representative to Perform Religious Service**

17. Zenwest shall post on its website a list of religious services available to members and to the general public. Individuals wishing to obtain such services from an authorized representative of Zenwest shall submit their request to the Abbot/Abbess.
18. While a member may be authorized to perform a particular ceremony or to teach specific courses, until that member has reached the position of Lay Teacher or Teacher, all ceremonies and courses must be approved in writing by the Abbot/Abbess before being performed or taught.

### **Appointment to a Religious Position**

19. Each member must complete a registration and consent form if the member wishes to be considered for religious authorization.
20. The Practice Council will meet periodically to consider possible candidates for religious positions.
21. Prior to such meetings the Abbot/Abbess will provide the Practice Council with the names of prospective candidates, the category that each candidate is qualified for, and any specific details if the Abbot/Abbess is requesting that the candidate be considered without meeting the guideline.
22. Any member may submit to the Abbot/Abbess a written request to have their name stand for consideration for advancement by the Practice Council, even if they do not meet the basic guideline.
23. Following submission of nominations, the Practice Council will have fourteen (14) days for consideration. After the consideration period, a Practice Council meeting will be convened and council members will have the opportunity to discuss the candidate(s), and vote to accept a candidate as appropriate for the

stated category or to decline the candidate as inappropriate at this time. Any candidate that is declined is free to stand for consideration in the future.

24. To be successful, a candidate must be approved by 75% of the Practice Council. All members of the Practice Council are expected to cast a vote. Proxy voting will be permitted when executed in writing by the Practice Council member unable to attend, and must explicitly state the Practice Council member's name and their vote(s) (accepting or declining each candidate). Proxy votes must be received by the Abbot/Abbess prior to the commencement of the Practice Council meeting during which a vote is to be held. Anonymous votes are not permitted in the Practice Council.
25. The Abbot/Abbess will meet with each candidate to inform them of the result of the vote and the reasons for concern if the candidate is not approved by the Practice Council.
26. The Abbot/Abbess will discuss with successful candidates the responsibilities and expectations associated with the religious position in question. The candidate will choose whether or not to accept the proposed position. Accepting or declining an offered position is a matter of free will, and no member should be made to feel that there is any negative consequence to declining. If the candidate declines the placement, they will not be considered for the category in question again until they put forward their own name for consideration in a subsequent process.
27. If the candidate accepts the proposed position, and a confirmation ceremony is indicated in Appendix A ("Training Guideline"), the confirmation ceremony must take place before the candidate is considered to have assumed the position. If no confirmation ceremony is required, the candidate will be considered to have assumed the position upon their acceptance.

### **Voluntary Resignation and Re-establishment of a Religious Position**

28. Religious positions within Zenwest are voluntary. If personal circumstances or choice determine that a Zenwest member is unable to fulfill the responsibilities and expectations of their position, they should meet with the Abbot/Abbess to discuss being placed into a position they feel that they can fulfill (and are qualified for).
29. At any point if the member then feels able to resume the responsibilities they have left, they are free to return to their previous category after meeting with the Abbot/Abbess, and are not required to stand for reconsideration by the full Practice Council.

### **Complaints Relating to Religious Duties**

30. Individuals with complaints regarding performance of religious duties by a Zenwest member have the right to:
  - a. Express their concerns to Zenwest;
  - b. Obtain support to explore possible options to address the concerns; and/or
  - c. Receive information about the steps taken by Zenwest to address the issue(s) of concern.
31. Zenwest members who are the subjects of a complaint in regard to their performance of religious duties have the right to:
  - a. Be informed that concerns have been raised;
  - b. Express to Zenwest their perspective on the concerns raised;
  - c. Obtain support to explore possible options to address the concerns; and/or
  - d. Receive information about the steps taken by Zenwest to address the issue(s) of concern.

32. Options for individuals with complaints regarding performance of religious duties by a member of Zenwest include:
- a. Discussion of concerns directly with the Zenwest member(s) involved.
    - i. Anyone involved in the conflict may approach a member of the Practice Council to request support, advocacy, or assistance with an attempt to mediate resolution at an interpersonal level.
  - b. Expression of concerns verbally or in writing to any member of the Zenwest Practice Council.
    - i. The Council member may, after considering the concerns and clarifying with the complainant what course of action they would like to pursue, direct the Abbot/Abbess to call a meeting of the Zenwest Practice Council to discuss the concerns with the Practice Council as a whole. In requesting that the Zenwest Practice Council be convened, the Abbot/Abbess should be advised of the reason for calling the meeting.
    - ii. The Practice Council will listen to the concerns, determine what additional information is needed to evaluate the concerns, determine whether any immediate interim measures are required while the Practice Council is investigating the issue, decide how to inform the individuals involved that a complaint has been made, and decide how to keep the complainant informed of the next steps.
    - iii. The Practice Council shall inform the Board of Zenwest if there are concerns raised that could have implications for the governance of the Society (e.g., alleged theft of Zenwest funds) or that could have legal implications. The Board will then work with the Practice Council to jointly investigate and determine appropriate action.
  - c. Expression of concerns verbally or in writing to any Director on the Board of Zenwest.
    - i. The Board member may, after considering the concerns and clarifying with the complainant what course of action they would like to pursue, direct the Board Chair to call a Board meeting to discuss the concerns with the Board as a whole.
    - ii. The Board will listen to the concerns, determine what additional information is needed to evaluate the concerns, determine whether any immediate interim measures are required while the Board is investigating the issue, decide how to inform the individuals involved that a complaint has been made, and decide how to keep the complainant informed of the next steps.
  - d. Following the procedures in the Bylaws of Zenwest to convene a General Meeting of the members to discuss the concerns.
  - e. Contacting an outside body (e.g., human rights organization, legal advocate) to discuss the concerns and evaluate options for resolution/redress.
33. False accusations regarding performance of religious duties can cause significant harm. If the Practice Council feels a complaint has been made inappropriately – whether thoughtlessly or with the intent to harm – corrective action (including the sanctions and remedies outlined below) may be taken by the Practice Council.

### **Sanctions and Remedies**

34. In determining sanctions and remedies the Practice Council and/or Board of Zenwest shall consider the nature and context of the offense, and the wishes of those directly affected.

- a. If everyone affected by an offense is willing to participate, the Practice Council and/or Board of Zenwest may organize and facilitate a restorative circle aimed at providing an opportunity for everyone affected by an offense to discuss the impacts, collectively determine how to repair the harm done, and develop a plan to prevent future occurrences. Participation in this type of circle is voluntary and cannot be imposed by the Practice Council and/or Board of Zenwest.
35. The Practice Council may require as a condition of retention of religious authority that a Zenwest member complete any of the following, singly or in combination, to make restitution for an offence and prevent recurrence:
    - a. Perform Sange (purification ceremony);
    - b. Perform service to the sangha or the broader community;
    - c. Develop and implement a self-education plan;
    - d. Participate in a sangha support and accountability network;
    - e. Receive increased supervision in the performance of some or all religious duties;
    - f. Other, as deemed appropriate.
  36. The Practice Council may take the following disciplinary actions, singly or in combination, to restrict the scope of a Zenwest member's religious authority:
    - a. Suspend or revoke some or all religious duties associated with the Zenwest member's religious position;
    - b. Demote a Zenwest member to a lower level of religious authorization;
    - c. Suspend or remove a Zenwest member from the Zenwest Practice Council;
    - d. Make a recommendation to the Board of Directors that the member be expelled from Zenwest;
    - e. Make a recommendation to the Board of Directors to pursue legal remedies; or
    - f. Other, as deemed appropriate.

### **Review**

37. This policy and associated procedures/guidelines may be reviewed and revised from time to time, as required by the Zenwest Practice Council, but no less than every five (5) years.
38. Zenwest members shall be informed of any changes to this policy or to associated procedures/guidelines.

## Appendix A

### Training Guideline

		Member (Basic or Full)	Householder Path			
			Householder (a)	Householder (b)	Senior Householder	Noble Householder
Practice	Years	0	1 year as member	3 years as member	3 yrs as Householder (5 yrs as member)	5 yrs as Senior Householder
	Programmes	Orientation or Consultation	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals	Fundamentals
	Ceremony Completed	Shokenko & New Student	Jukai	Jukai	Jukai	Jukai
	5 or 7 Day	0	2 with Zenwest	Not required	Not required	Not required
	Leadership Requirement	NA	NA	Not required	Not required	Not required
	One-Day	0	5 with Zenwest	Not required	Not required	Not required
Ceremony	Jukai	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Tokudo	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Suiji	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Wedding	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Memorial	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Centre	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sangha Respon- sibility	Training Offices	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
	Operational Teams/Board	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
	Centre Development	Member	Member & Optional Practice Council	Member & Optional Practice Council	Member & Optional Practice Council	Member & Optional Practice Council
	Training Participation	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
	Centre Participation	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
Teaching Authorities	Public Talks/ Representation	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Courses	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Ceremony	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Intensives	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Robes		Black dogi	Black lay robe with white Wagesa	Black lay robe with white Wagesa	Black lay robe with white Wagesa (gold tassel)	Black lay robe with white Rakusu

		<b>Eldership Path</b>			
		<b>Postulant</b>	<b>Elder</b>	<b>Junior Lay Teacher</b>	<b>Lay Teacher</b>
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Years</b>	1 year as member	1 year as Postulant	5 Years as Elder	10 years as Elder
	<b>Programmes</b>	Fundamentals	Eldership	Teaching Apprentice	Teaching Supervision
	<b>Ceremony Completed</b>	Jukai	Eldership at Jukai	NA	Lay Teacher Ascension
	<b>5 or 7 Day</b>	2 with Zenwest	4 with Zenwest	10	15 with Zenwest
	<b>Leadership Requirement</b>	NA	Deliver Tuesday Orientation	Assist 2 Full Orientation to Zen courses, and Intensive Preparation	Assist with 2 Orientation & Intensive Preparation courses & teach 4; assist with 2 Fundamentals
	<b>One-Day</b>	5 with Zenwest	10 with Zenwest	25 with Zenwest	55 with Zenwest
<b>Ceremony</b>	<b>Jukai</b>	NA	NA	2 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Tokudo</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA
	<b>Suiji</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA
	<b>Wedding</b>	NA	NA	2 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Memorial</b>	NA	NA	2 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Centre</b>	NA	NA	2 as assistant	5 as assistant
<b>Sangha Responsibility</b>	<b>Training Offices</b>	Suggested	Jikjitsu, Shoji, Densu, Tenzo	Shika	Shika
	<b>Operational Teams/Board</b>	Participant	Participant	Captain	Captain
	<b>Centre Development</b>	Practice Council	Practice Council	Practice Council	Practice Council
	<b>Training Participation</b>	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
	<b>Centre Participation</b>	Suggested	Suggested	Suggested	Suggested
<b>Teaching Authorities</b>	<b>Public Talks/Representation</b>	NA	Specific readings approved by Abbot/Abbess	Specifically clarified & with express approval of Abbot/Abbess	Practice-based Dharma Talks
	<b>Courses</b>	Tuesday Orientation	Orientation to Zen & Intensive Preparation Assistant	Orientation to Zen & Intensive Preparation	Fundamentals of Zen
	<b>Ceremony</b>	NA	Assist with Jukai	Assist with Jukai, Wedding, or Memorial	Preceptor for Jukai; officiant for Wedding or Memorial
	<b>Intensives</b>	NA	Sanctioned practice group- No Intensive	Lead one-day w/no talk and no interview	Lead one-day w/ informal interview
<b>Robes</b>		Black lay robe with black Wagesa	Black lay robe with black Rakusu	Black lay robe with blue Rakusu	Black lay robe with grey/silver Rakusu



		<b>Monk</b>		
		<b>Novice</b>	<b>Junior</b>	<b>Priest</b>
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Years</b>	2 years as Postulant	3 years as Novice	2 years as Junior
	<b>Programmes</b>	Leaving Home	Teaching Apprentice	Teaching Supervision
	<b>Ceremony Completed</b>	Tokudo	NA	Priest Ascension
	<b>5 or 7 Day</b>	6 with Zenwest	12 with Zenwest	15 with Zenwest
	<b>Leadership Requirement</b>	Assist with 2 complete Orientation to Zen & Intensive Preparation	Instructed 4 Orientation to Zen & Intensive Preparation courses	Assist with 2 complete Fundamentals
	<b>One-Day</b>	15 with Zenwest	40 with Zenwest	55 with Zenwest
<b>Ceremony</b>	<b>Jukai</b>	1 as assistant	3 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Tokudo</b>	NA	1 as assistant	3 as assistant
	<b>Suiji</b>	NA	NA	NA
	<b>Wedding</b>	1 as assistant	3 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Memorial</b>	1 as assistant	3 as assistant	5 as assistant
	<b>Centre</b>	1 as assistant	3 as assistant	5 as assistant
<b>Sangha Responsibility</b>	<b>Training Offices</b>	Shika/Ino	NA	Vice-Abbot/Abbess
	<b>Operational Teams/Board</b>	Captain	Participant/Captain	Participant/Captain
	<b>Centre Development</b>	Practice Council	Practice Council	Monk or Acting Abbot/Abbess of affiliate Centre; Practice Council
	<b>Training Participation</b>	Level 3 or with Leave	Level 3 or with Leave	Level 3 or with Leave
	<b>Centre Participation</b>	Suggested	Suggested	Suggested
<b>Teaching Authorities</b>	<b>Public Talks/Representation</b>	Specifically clarified and with express approval of Abbot/Abbess	Specifically clarified and with express approval of Abbot/Abbess	Practice-based Dharma Talks
	<b>Courses</b>	Orientation to Zen & Intensive Preparation courses	Fundamentals assistant	Fundamentals of Zen/ Leaving Home assistant
	<b>Ceremony</b>	Assist with Jukai, Wedding, Memorial, or Centre	Assist with Jukai, Wedding, Memorial, or Centre	Officiate Jukai, Wedding, Memorial, or Centre
	<b>Intensives</b>	Sanctioned practice group- No Intensive	Lead one-day w/informal interview, no talk	Lead one-day and five-day w/talk and formal interview
<b>Robes</b>		Black monk's robes with padded belt + shaved head	Black monk's robes with cord belt + shaved head	Black monk's robes w/cord belt, blue Rakusu and Kesa + shaved head

		<b>Teacher</b>		
		<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Great Teacher</b>	<b>Master Teacher</b>
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Years</b>	5 years as Priest	10 years as Teacher	10 years as Great Teacher
	<b>Programmes</b>	TBD	TBD	TBD
	<b>Ceremony Completed</b>	Suiji	NA	Kampatsu
	<b>5 or 7 Day</b>	30	60	100
	<b>Leadership Requirement</b>	Assist with 2 Leaving Home	TBD	TBD
	<b>One-Day</b>	75	100	125
<b>Ceremony</b>	<b>Jukai</b>	3 as preceptor	10 as preceptor	10 as ordination master
	<b>Tokudo</b>	5 as assistant	5 as preceptor/master	10 as master
	<b>Suiji</b>	NA	TBD	5 as master
	<b>Wedding</b>	3 as officiant	10 as officiant	15 as officiant
	<b>Memorial</b>	3 as officiant	10 as officiant	15 as officiant
	<b>Centre</b>	3 as officiant	10 as officiant	15 as officiant
<b>Sangha Responsibility</b>	<b>Training Offices</b>	Abbot/Abbess/Teacher of Centre	Abbot/Abbess/Teacher of Regional Head Temple	Any
	<b>Operational Teams/Board</b>	NA	NA	NA
	<b>Centre Development</b>	Abbot/Abbess of Centre	Regional Head Temple Abbot/Abbess	Abbot of Hondo (HQ)
	<b>Training Participation</b>	As required	As required	As required
	<b>Centre Participation</b>	As required	As required	As required
<b>Teaching Authorities</b>	<b>Public Talks/Representation</b>	Teisho on Zen Texts	Any	Any
	<b>Courses</b>	Leaving Home	All	All
	<b>Ceremony</b>	Officiate Tokudo and authorize up to Priest	Officiate Teacher Ceremony	Officiate Great Teacher Ceremony
	<b>Intensives</b>	Lead seven-day and training periods	Any	Any
<b>Robes</b>	Blue monk's robes, grey/silver Rakusu and Kesa	Blue monk's robes, yellow/gold Rakusu and Kesa	Brown monk's robes, gold Rakusu and Kesa	

## Notes Regarding Training Participation

1. Definitions of training participation are based on the following understanding:
  - a. Buddha
    - i. Receiving regular teaching via recorded talks or being present at dharma talks given by your teacher.
    - ii. Maintaining a regular schedule of training meetings\* with your teacher.
  - b. Dharma
    - i. Maintaining a regular personal practice of zazen in your home and daily life.
    - ii. Investigate the teachings as they relate to your daily life.
  - c. Sangha
    - i. Participating regularly in communal formal practice\*\*.
    - ii. Learning to support the practice of others both formally and informally.

\* "Training meetings" refer to extensive one-on-one meetings with the teacher, and not interview held during practice sessions. These can be held in person or via internet.

\*\* Communal formal practice refers to members' practice sessions. Practice sessions open to the general public (e.g., UVic Tuesdays) are only included if the member performs an officer role.

2. Training participation levels are as follows:
  - a. At level 1, the expectation is for the member to meet with the teacher for a training meeting at least once each month. A regular personal practice is expected. The member is also expected to participate in communal formal practice at least twice each month.
  - b. At level 2, the expectation is for the member to meet with the teacher for training meetings at least twice each month. Personal practice is expected every day. The member is also expected to participate in communal formal practice at least once each week.
  - c. At level 3, individual expectations are determined by the Abbot/Abbess, but generally the member will be expected to meet with the teacher for training meetings at least twice each month. Personal practice is expected every day. The member is expected to participate in all opportunities for communal formal practice unless given leave by the Abbot/Abbess.

	<b>Level 1</b> (Practice Council Member; optional for Lay Member)	<b>Level 2</b> (Elder, Junior Lay Teacher, Lay Teacher)	<b>Level 3</b> (Novice, Monk, Priest – unless given leave by Abbot/Abbess)
<b>Buddha</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive regular teaching via Dharma talks (live/recorded)</li> <li>• Meet with teacher for a training meeting at least once per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive regular teaching via Dharma talks (live/recorded)</li> <li>• Meet with teacher for training meetings at least twice per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive regular teaching via Dharma talks (live/recorded)</li> <li>• Meet with teacher for training meetings at least twice per month, or as required by Abbot/Abbess</li> </ul>
<b>Dharma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular personal practice</li> <li>• Investigate the teachings as they relate to your daily life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily personal practice</li> <li>• Investigate the teachings as they relate to your daily life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily personal practice</li> <li>• Investigate the teachings as they relate to your daily life</li> </ul>
<b>Sangha</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in communal formal practice at least twice each month</li> <li>• Support the practice of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in communal formal practice at least once each week</li> <li>• Support the practice of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in all opportunities for communal formal practice unless given leave by Abbot/Abbess</li> <li>• Support the practice of others</li> </ul>