

Dharma Rain Zen Center
Succession Plan - FINAL
December 2015
Sent to DRZC Board of Directors on 12/14/2015 for approval

Summary

The goal of this plan is a successful transition of the Abbacy at Dharma Rain Zen Center. While deeply feeling the absence of our co-Abbot, Kyogen Carlson, this past year, we are encouraged and grateful that our current Abbot, Gyokuko Carlson, plans to continue indefinitely in her role as teacher. Over the next five years Gyokuko would like to transition administrative temple duties to the next generation of leaders. This document addresses the plan and timeline for transition from Gyokuko as sole Abbot to the next generation of leadership.

The Succession Committee recommends a clearly communicated, phased succession of a co-Abbot candidate from within the sangha, with a gradual transfer of responsibility to the next generation to be completed by 2020.

Background

DRZCs existing succession procedures are described in our Bylaws as a top-down process designed to accommodate a sudden, unexpected vacancy rather than a gradual transition involving the membership. The Board of Directors is authorized to carry out the business of the temple in the unexpected absence of a qualified Abbot.

Dharma Rain's 2011 Strategic Plan identified succession as one of its main areas of focus and outlined succession procedures and points to cover.

"Our aim is to structure a transition that is harmonious, minimizes conflict and anxiety about the transition, and shows clarity. Succession should be a straightforward, simple, and transparent process that preserves our sense of community - both in the lineage and on the flavor and practice at Dharma Rain. There is a real advantage in consciously planning for this transition so we maintain temple culture in a way that fosters its development, rather than disrupting it due to a rocky transition."

(See Appendix A for a complete listing of recommendations in the Strategic Plan.)

The Strategic Plan recommended a committee be formed to plan, monitor and regulate succession. This was intended to remove some administrative burden from the Abbots and ensure a smooth and systematic transition by pinning the process to a timeline. The committee was to be composed of the Abbot(s) and representatives from the Elders Council, Dharma Council and Board of Directors.

A Succession Committee was formed accordingly and met for the first time August, 2011. (See Appendix D)

Summary of organizational progress in accordance with the Strategic Plan:

- Succession procedure revised in ByLaws (Appendix C)

- Successors list established and maintained by the Abbots in accordance with the ByLaws for use in case of a sudden, unexpected vacancy
- Interviews with similar Soto Zen organizations completed
- Overall succession timeline developed
- Abbot Position Description developed by the Board of Directors (Appendix B)

Recommendation

This Succession Plan, completed in 2015, builds upon what is already in place as described above. It will be submitted to the Dharma and Elders Councils for review and then to the Board of Directors for approval.

Our organization's plan had long been for one of the Abbots to step down, appointment of a new co-Abbot, allowing that person to gain experience and sangha support before the other Abbot steps down.

The Succession Committee recommends appointing a co-Abbot from within the sangha, and who meets the qualifications set forth below. This would provide several benefits:

- Provides a natural transition path, minimizing future disruption
- Allows time for the sangha to adjust to new leadership
- Allows time for new leadership to gain experience and proficiency in the role
- Allows Gyokuko flexibility in deciding when she would like to retire

Timing of the appointment is to be determined as it depends on several variables, including Gyokuko's wishes, the Siskiyou project schedule, what makes sense given the natural grieving process within the sangha, balanced with the desire for reassurance of organizational continuity. According to DRZC's Bylaws, appointment of the co-Abbot must be ratified by the sangha.

In Spring of 2014, Gyokuko suggested setting 2017 as the target date for sangha ratification of the co-Abbot. Phase I of site development would be completed by then and development activities would diminish.

Recommended Timeline:

2013	Kyogen transitioned out of the role of Godo - Jiko appointed.
2015	Succession Plan developed by Succession Committee and submitted to the Dharma and Elders Councils and the Board of Directors for review, and then to the Board of Directors for approval.
2016	New Kanin named; Gyokuko to transition out of that role. Succession plan formally communicated to sangha.
2017	Abbot and Succession Committee propose co-Abbot nominee for Board approval. Sangha ratification vote held within six months of Board approval. Installation ceremony to follow sangha ratification.
2020	Abbacy transition completed.

Communication Plan:

The objective is to clearly communicate the succession process and timeline to sangha and stakeholders, starting with leadership and senior members (those who others turn to for direction) to gain support of the membership. Specific elements and timeline for communication are dependent on adoption of this Succession Plan.

As usual when rolling out new information, a number of communication pathways will be used to reach the largest number of people. We have developed a draft template summarizing the information to be communicated, who might be responsible, and when and how, for use as a basis for planning. It is intended to be a guide only, and adjusted as necessary and prudent throughout the communication process.

Appendix A - Strategic Plan (pp 27-30 of 62), Succession and Status

Succession Overview

Our founding Abbots are approaching retirement age. While they plan to continue indefinitely in their role as teachers, over the next ten years (by 2020) they would like to transition their administrative temple duties to the next generation of leaders. There is a real advantage in consciously planning for this transition so that we maintain our Temple culture in a way that fosters its development, rather than disrupting it due to a rocky transition. This chapter attempts to structure a transition that is harmonious, minimizes conflict and anxiety about the transition, and shows clarity. Succession should be a straightforward, simple, and transparent process that preserves our sense of continuity – both in the lineage and in the flavor of practice at Dharma Rain.

Current State

We have a process in place for handling succession under several sets of circumstances. It is a multi-tiered system that incorporates input from the Abbots, Elders Council, Board of Directors, and the general membership to ratify a decision. The current process for succession is described in the Bylaws (last revised in 2003):

[Status: The Bylaws have since been updated in accordance with the recommendations in this document. See Appendix C.]

Section 7.1: Appointment

The Abbot[s] may appoint a successor, subject to review by the voting membership. A notarized and dated Successors List, or notice of no appointment, will be held by the corporate Secretary. This list, when possible, should have at least three names ranked in order of preference. Whenever the list is amended or updated, the date of the new list will be noted in the corporate minutes. In case of the death or incapacity of the Abbot[s] to serve, the Board will contact those named on the list. The highest ranking person named on the list to accept the position will become interim Abbot, able to act as Abbot until confirmation. The Board must contact the voting membership and arrange for a vote of approval to be held within six months of the acceptance of the interim Abbot. Voting members may vote “yea” or “nay” on the appointment, with a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast against confirmation required to overturn the appointment.

Section 7.2: Council of Elders

The Abbot[s] shall appoint a Council of Elders from the membership. The Council shall be chosen from currently active lay or monk disciples. The Council membership shall be recorded in Board meeting minutes, and shall be updated annually. The purpose of the Council is to assist and advise the Board in identifying and recruiting candidates for the Abbacy, and on other matters as determined by the Board.

Section 7.3: No Appointment

In the absence of a Successors List, or if no one on the Successors List accepts the position of Abbot, the Board of Directors and officers are fully empowered to conduct the business of the Temple until a replacement is found. The Board shall convene the Council of Elders to assist with finding a replacement. An Abbot must be a fully transmitted priest of the Soto Zen tradition. When the Board makes a selection, it is put before the voting members for ratification. A sixty

percent (60%) majority of the votes cast in approval is required to ratify the selection.

A. Benefits of Current State

A clear course of action that provides for certain circumstances, and gives the current Abbots primary responsibility for deciding the next abbot (s).

B. Limitations of Current State

The current succession procedure was designed to accommodate a sudden, unexpected vacancy. It is a top-down process, rather than a gradual transition involving the membership. Some elements of the process (the Elders Council) are in place, but others (the Successors List) are not. Also missing is the explicit preference to succeed from within the sangha. The transition process is not clear to most members. Finally, the only clear requirement to become abbot is to be a fully transmitted Soto Zen priest; more specificity at this level would make the decision more obvious.

III. Potential Future States

A. First Option: Stay the present course.

No specific changes are made as a result of the strategic planning process. It is left up to the Board and Dharma Council to identify and address the issues raised here over time.

Pros: Simple, and doesn't require any extra time or administration.

Cons: Relies on the Carlson's to manage the process. Less transparent.

B. Second Option: Form a Succession Committee to assist the process of transitioning the abbacy. This option establishes a Succession Committee to plan for, monitor, and regulate succession.

Pros: Takes some of the administrative burden off the Abbots, and pins the process to a timeline, helping to ensure a smooth and systematic transition.

Cons: Complexity of creating another committee, staffed primarily by people who are already highly committed.

IV. Sangha Input/Feedback/Concerns on this Focal Point

Traditionally there are "lineage" and "public" temples. The former were passed down in a family and evolved their own flavor; the latter were focused on training priests, and the abbot was more of an administrative/managerial role in charge of that training. We're more of a family/lineage style of temple, and want to keep the abbacy in the family if possible.

The succession process in the Bylaws reflects DRZC 15 years ago, when our unique lineage traditions were much more closely held, mostly by the Carlson's. That's no longer the case; our unique flavor is now held by Lay Teachers, Lay Disciples, and Junior Priests as well.

The Elders' Council's original mandate was to advise the Board on succession in an emergency. The process required will likely depend on the circumstances when the need arises.

Succession and facilities seem like a lot to tackle at the same time. They need to happen together so that the Carlson's have input, and the new abbots are invested in the process.

Recommendations and current status

Item 1. Establish a Succession Committee to plan, monitor and regulate succession by June 2011. DONE.

Item 2. Kyogen and Gyokuko to notarize, date, and file a Successors List by August 2011.

It is understood that this list is only to be used if they are unable to communicate their preferences.

[Status: DONE.

As of April, 2014, the Abbots, Gary Oshiro, and Richard Fumyo Mishaga know the current and planned new location of the key to the safe deposit box where the list is kept, as we move from our existing buildings and transition to the new center. October, 2014. Gyokuko verified that the list reflects her wishes.]

Item 3. Identify 3-5 Zen Centers nationally that have gone through the process of succession by October 2011.

[Status: DONE.

We identified 8-10 Centers with about 15 contact names, and conducted interviews asking what worked and what didn't, and what recommendations they have for a skillful succession process. The results were compiled and reported to the Board, Dharma Council, and Elders Council in January 2012.]

Item 4. By 2014, the Succession Committee will have developed an Abbacy transition plan and submit it to the Board, Dharma Council, and Elders Council for review and to the Board for approval.

[Status: Completed in 2015.]

Item 5. By 2015, the Succession Committee to propose nominee/s for Board approval and ratification by the sangha.

There are many circumstances that may affect how the Abbots and Succession Committee make decisions. However, there are some qualities the nominee/s should have, based on discussions with the Cohort and Focus groups, and within the Strategic Planning Committee. The goal is to have a nominee/s who:

- has fairly united support from the sangha;
- demonstrates the maturity of practice to inspire;
- has the organizational acumen and interpersonal sensitivity to lead;
- displays the practice-realization to teach the sangha;
- be able to commit to full-time service, due both to the amount of work required and to the importance of an abbot's full-time presence and accessibility to the sangha, and to commit to long-term (working life) service, as this allows stability and trust to grow over many years and allows an abbot to develop skill in his/her role.
- Ideally, the nominee/s would be drawn from within the sangha, as this has the greatest likelihood of preserving the continuity of our lineage traditions and temple culture.

[Status: Planned for 2016-2017 timeframe.]

Item 6. Kyogen and Gyokuko to transition out of the Kanin and Godo roles by 2015.

[Status: Gyokuko to transition in 2016. Kyogen's transition completed 2014.]

Item 7. Abbacy transition to be completed by 2020.

[Status: No change in completion date.]

Appendix B - Position Description

Dharma Rain Zen Center Position Description

Position Title: Abbot

FTE: 1.0 FTE; hours variable

Pay Rate: Salaried

Benefits Status: Benefited

Reports to: Board of Directors

Date Prepared: 4/19/2012

Purpose: The abbot is the spiritual director of Dharma Rain Zen Center, and must be ordained and transmitted as a Soto Zen Priest. S/he determines matters of liturgy and teaching, and gives direction to the membership on these matters. As the leader of the Center, the abbot is responsible for supporting and promoting organizational goals as described in the Strategic Plan. The abbot is subject to a regular performance review by the Board of Directors.

Summary of Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

- Provide spiritual leadership, guidance, and instruction to the sangha.
- Lead and serve in ceremonial roles; have a working knowledge of Soto Zen services, rituals, and ceremonies.
- Understand, follow, and support DRZC articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policies, including ongoing support of the organizational mission and vision.
- Foster the health of the organization by participating in and supporting fundraising activities and contributing to Dharma Rain's positive reputation in and connections with the larger Portland community.
- Represent Dharma Rain at the local, state, and national levels; participate in community events; participate in professional organizations as appropriate (e.g., the SZBA).
- Appoint and supervise the Godo, Kanin, and any assistants to these positions. The abbot may fill one or more of these positions him/herself. Appointments are subject to ratification by the Dharma Council.
- Serve as a formal teacher to monastic and/or lay disciples
- May sit on the Dharma Council; Dharma Council decisions are subject to ratification by the Abbot.
- Appoints the temple shuso/s.
- The abbot is expected to conduct him/herself according to the 16 Bodhisattva precepts, and to adhere to the highest ethical standards. This includes abiding by Dharma Rain's Zen Practice in Community ethics policy. No teacher, including the abbot, may exploit the teacher-student relationship for personal services, financial gain, or sexual favors. No teacher, including the abbot, may engage in a sexual relationship with his/her students.

Qualifications

Skills:

1. Proven ability to foster collaboration and consensus
2. Skill in communicating the dharma in English
3. Strong leadership and facilitation skills
4. Familiarity with legal, ethical, and financial rules and regulations as they apply to religious organizations
5. Understanding of the Mandala organizational structure and Councils' and Temple Officers' respective areas of responsibility.

Education and Experience:

Required:

1. A minimum of five years of monastic training
2. Full dharma transmission by a teacher recognized by the SZBA
3. Authorization and experience in offering formal sanzen
4. Leadership experience in a religious setting
5. An understanding of and support for the Buddhist style of practice at this temple as described in "Lineage Tradition and Temple Culture."

In order to be hired, completion of a satisfactory background check is required. Upon hire, the employee will be asked to sign this position description indicating that they understand the requirements of the position. There is a probationary period that lasts 90 days from date of hire. During this time, employees have the opportunity to evaluate Dharma Rain as a place to work and the supervisor of this position has a chance to evaluate the employee. During this introductory period, both the employee and Dharma Rain have the right to terminate employment without advance notice. Upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period, a 90-day review will be given. Assuming this is satisfactory, thereafter employee performance will be evaluated by regular reviews.

Print Employee Name

Employee Signature

Date

Appendix C - Dharma Rain Zen Center

Succession section from Bylaws - revised December 2012

Section 3.3: Abbot(s)

The current Abbot may appoint a co-Abbot, subject to confirmation by a majority of votes cast by the membership.

Section 3.4: Succession

Section 3.4.1: Succession by Appointment

The Abbot(s) may appoint a successor, subject to confirmation by a majority of votes cast by the membership.

Section 3.4.2: Maintenance of a Successor List

A dated Successors List signed by the Abbot(s) will be held by the Corporate Secretary. This list, when possible, should have at least three names ranked in order of preference. Whenever the list is amended or updated, the date of the new list will be noted in the Board meeting minutes.

Section 3.4.3: Interim Abbot

In case of the death or incapacity of the Abbot[s] to serve, the Board will contact those named on the Successor List. The candidate with the highest numerical ranking on the list who accepts the position will become interim Abbot, able to act as Abbot until confirmation by a majority of votes cast by the membership. The Board shall arrange for a membership vote to be held within six months of the interim appointment for the acceptance or denial of the interim Abbot.

Section 3.4.4: No Appointment

In the absence of a Successors List, or if no one on the Successors List accepts the position of Abbot, the Board of Directors and officers are fully empowered to conduct the business of the Temple until a replacement is found. The Board shall convene the Council of Elders to assist with finding a replacement. An Abbot must be a fully transmitted priest of the Soto Zen tradition. The Board shall arrange for a membership vote to be held within six months of an appointment for the acceptance or denial of the replacement Abbot. The appointment shall be subject to confirmation by a majority of votes cast by the membership.

Appendix D - Succession Committee

The succession committee was formed in August, 2011 and was composed of the Abbots and two representatives appointed from the Elders Council, Dharma Council, and Board of Directors.

Original Members

Abbots: Kyogen Carlson, Gyokuko Carlson

Dharma Council: Bukkai Washburn, Genko Rainwater

Elders Council: Fumyo Mishaga, Jiko Tisdale

Board of Directors: Kengan Treiman (chair), Genso Skinner*

* Genso resigned and was replaced by Teijin Grimm in 2012.

Maintenance of the Succession Committee

For continuity's sake, committee members will continue to serve on the committee through 2020 to monitor and regulate succession according to plan, whether or not they are still members of the board or council that appointed them.

Succession committee members who leave the committee will be replaced by the board or council that appointed them.

Transition milestones will be monitored by the committee through their completion, at which time the committee may be dissolved.