

Topic 4: Empowerment of Students

This topic looked into the hierarchical structure of the sangha and professionalization of administration, so it can become based more on skill than on rank, through shifting less dharma-related tasks from teachers to students with adequate formal education or experience. The resulting recommendations suggest promoting the culture of acknowledging volunteers, for example by developing a credit/loyalty system, enabling employment within school structures, and introducing a trusted person in ethics from among students. It also looked at including a dharma friend (mentorship) program in the Dharma Mirror and considering changing the dharma teacher title to one of several other options, including senior student, senior dharma student, meditation instructor, or dharma instructor.

Organic Changes Appear by Themselves

The voices of the sangha were summarized in the report together with case studies, which were to track the organic trends and changes that are already happening in our Kwan Um Zen centers and groups. The trends we observed (including Zen-Yoga days in Slovakia, Zen days without robes and sutra studies in Poland, London Diversity Multi-faith Organization) show that these bottom-up cultural processes are already in full motion and as such don't need any seal of approval other than the enthusiastic response among new and old practitioners.

Don't Know, Just Listen

The convention resulted in further refinements and ob-

jections for the topics or the process in general. This was documented for future organizers so they will learn from this "pilot study." The next step was evaluation of the recommendations by the European teachers group, which approved of most of the recommendations. And currently we are awaiting the official response from other regional groups and the international council.

In summary, throughout the whole sangha convention process, we heard clearly the voices of many of our members. Some are open to change, and others are reluctant to change. We are looking to safeguard a strong dharma in modern society, which offers many ways to deal with suffering and personal growth. It's important that we act skillfully and listen carefully in order to provide relief, instead of insisting we already know what is good for the times to come.

For the full report please visit kwanumeurope.org/2019/06/22/convention. ♦

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Agata Sobiecka (Hae In) has been practicing Zen for twenty years with four years of retreat experience and years living in Zen temples. After four years in Korea, she rested her monastic vows and lives now in Warsaw Zen Center as a bodhisattva teacher and European office director. She works as a psychotherapist.

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Poetry

On Age

I'm not the one I used to be
But you are the one I
Always knew
Fast and slow and
Standing still
Time plays this game
Wakes me up and asks
Who are you?



Living the way we
Feel is good
Breaking past rules
Of should and must
The flowers still bloom
The sun still shines



Sun changes
Moods
Cooler mornings



First rains
Grass and trees
Freshly green
Once more



The thoughts
Then the words
No thoughts
No words
Just be



Full moon
Seen through
Black branches
Outshines the streetlight

Rowena Gill is a longtime student in the Israeli sangha and the mother of Yuval Gill JDPSN. During her time in Japan she connected to Zen poetry, and now she writes her own in her garden after morning practice.