

Minutes of the SnowFlower Sangha Steering Council
Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Present: Chuck Heikkinen, Walt Keough, Suzanne Kilkus, Efrat Livny, Cheri Maples, Karuna Namenwirth, Karen Plum, Carol Rubin, Savitri Tsering

The meeting of the Steering Council (STC) was convened at approximately 7:00 p.m. at Walt's home. The meeting began with a brief meditation.

1. All tasks but one from the last meeting were completed.
2. There was unanimous approval for Savitri to assume the position of Council Vice President.
3. **2010 Budget Approval and report from the Finance Committee**

Karen and Suzanne presented the proposed budget from the Finance Committee and noted that it reflected the recent ABM decision to make the budget year coincide with the calendar year. They reported that weekly donations have been up and the financial situation is good. The proposed budget increases funds for the library, and allocates \$425 each for expenses incurred by Love and Understanding or the Coming Home Project; this decision to allocate funds for project expenses revises the decision reached at the September Steering Council meeting and will be explained at the ABM. It was agreed that the individuals who bought the materials for the meditation cushions for the women at Burke Correctional will be reimbursed the cost of the materials (approximately \$95) from the allocation for the Coming Home Project expenses.

The Sangha currently has a cash surplus of \$4,500. In July, the ABM meeting adopted the Steering Council's recommendation that 75% of surplus go to retreat scholarships according to the new scholarship policy and procedures, and 25% to the Love and Understanding Project. The sum of \$1,125 will be sent promptly to the L & U project, but it is possible that the remaining 75% is more than will be needed for retreat scholarships. We will monitor the situation and if the surplus remains large, consider adding charitable donations back into our surplus formula at the ABM. It was suggested that at the ABM the Steering Council ask for increased discretion to allocate donations after receiving proposals from Sangha members. The proposed 2010 budget was unanimously approved.

4. Report on Our 2009 Retreat

Walt reported that feedback from the retreat was extremely positive, other than concerns about the cleanliness and sleeping comfort of the facilities. Attendance was at a maximum of 94. The retreat gave out \$1349 in scholarships but still resulted in \$2,537 income, and collected an additional \$513 in scholarship donations. Walt asked if the Council was supportive of moving the date of the retreat one to two weeks if possible so as to avoid the conflict with the annual Insight Meditation retreat; the Council was

receptive but suggested moving the date earlier if possible so individuals can still choose to camp. The retreat coordinators will also consider: 1) having some honest communication with the facility regarding expectations of cleanliness and a complete kitchen, and perhaps establishing a cleaning committee or cleaning service before the retreat starts; 2) establishing a refund policy and adding it to the registration form.

5. Website update

Chuck reported that he, Don Katz, Linda Jordan and David Haskin will be meeting to evaluate the website.

6. Project Updates

a. Love & Understanding: Chuck reported that the 13 minute Love and Understanding DVD is completed and will shortly be sent along with a packet of information to all the U.S. Sanghas in Thay's tradition to increase Love & Understanding fundraising. It was noted that the Sangha list at the Estes Park retreat was very outdated, and that some attempt should be made to update addresses before sending out the packets. Karuna volunteered to work on an updated list.

b. Coming Home Project: Carol referenced her email letter of January 4, 2010 in describing the many activities of the Coming Home project in the last year. All trained volunteers have been offered an opportunity to work in one or more prisons; volunteers have worked in Thompson Correctional Center, John Burke Correctional Center, Jackson Correctional Institution, and Columbia Maximum Security, have an ongoing Circle of Support for recently released individuals, and tutored for GED exams. Carol also noted the changed role of the Coming Home Project: it will no longer attempt to administer, oversee, and provide training for all of the prison work which involve a variety of independent entities, but will provide ongoing support for Buddhist practitioners, be a communication conduit for other organizations, and may organize some new projects such as correspondence with incarcerated individuals. In soliciting SnowFlower volunteers, independent organizations should be very clear that they are independent and not the same as the Coming Home Project.

The Council approved the request from Kate Edwards for the Sangha to submit a letter to the prisons regulated by the Department of Corrections in support of her request to be treated as a prison chaplain.

Karuna noted that Thay's books and The Mindfulness Bell can be sent to prisons free of charge. Karuna will ask Jane Peckham to pursue having the publishers send books and/or the MB to the four prisons Coming Home has worked in; however, further information may be needed from Kate Edwards for Columbia which has many more restrictions.

7. Committee Reports

a. Schedulers Council: Karuna proposed that Metta practice be added as a subject to each two month cycle, similar to the treatment of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. This will be taken to the ABM.

b. Caretaking Council: Carol reported that the Council hopes to finalize this Sunday a plan to provide a more formalized process for providing support to Sangha members who

are experiencing acute illness, family crises, etc. It was noted that Jane Peckham is already doing something similar as a free-standing care project. It was suggested that the Council consider both acute and chronic situations, such as someone who is wheelchair dependent, or has hearing problems. Friends Meeting House has some equipment for the hearing impaired which Diane Lauver may know about. Cheri suggested that members of the Time Bank can donate hours for needs such as rides to medical appointments.

8. New Business

Revision of Lay Version of Five Mindfulness Trainings

Cheri reported that the committee of volunteers who revised these trainings has sent them off to Thay, but has so far received no feedback. One possible use for them would be to give female inmates at Burke Correctional the opportunity to take these trainings. Suzanne noted that it was a very rewarding experience to work on these revisions.

9. The Annual Business Meeting has been set for Monday, July 26, 2010 at Friends Meeting House from 6:30 to 9:00.

10. Tasks before next meeting:

Suzanne will contact Mary Michal about the L&U envelopes.

Karen will check about the Trinity rent.

Chuck will work with Karuna to aid in sending L&U packets to current sangha addresses.

Carol will take the caretaking comments back to the Caretaking Council and talk to Jane about her activity.

Karuna will contact Jane about getting books sent to 4 prisons, and try to find a more current list of U.S. sanghas.

Cheri will contact Thay or monastics about status of lay Mindfulness Trainings.

Walt will report back to David STC suggestions to improve retreat, including a checklist of expectations with facility, possible cleaning committee or hired service, and a refund policy on registration form, and ok to move date by one or two weeks.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 14, 7-9 p.m., Efrat's home