

Laughing Rivers Sangha Annual Meeting Minutes

Date: November 19, 2011, 9:30 to 12:30

Place: Deb Brooks house

Facilitators: Denys Candy & Dawn Lehman

Attendees: Michael M., Red, Jonathan, Tony, David, Martha, Kate, Natalie, George, Marty, Dennis O., Laura, and Deb M., Deborah B.

Meeting guidelines read by Denys & attendees

15 minute sitting

Denys invited all to be aware of our meeting habit energies and to consider the question: How can our participation in this meeting be a practice in itself; how might suggestions for the coming year deepen, strengthen or support our/my practice?

Attendees paired off to respond to one another about the two questions.

Dawn reviewed existing Sangha Practices with input all present. These include:

1. Tuesday night sitting supported by setup, closing, orientation facilitators, CDs, DVDs, library, attendees and the folks at New Light.
2. Retreats held twice yearly are supported by registration, a retreat committee, mailing on-site volunteers, bookstore attendants, Chan Huy, A/V, the hearth, the nuns, the caterer and attendees.
3. Days of Mindfulness are supported by a host, facilitators & attendees.
4. Order of Interbeing/Aspirant Group supported by mentors and aspirants. Participants support the sangha by attending retreats to connect with the larger OI community of practitioners, teachers and monastics.
5. Continuing Care Council (CCC) meets bi-monthly to facilitate manifesting items identified in the annual meeting and contribute to financial decision-making.
6. Website/List serve – support the sangha through sharing of information.
7. Finance Committee – collects and deposits donations, pays rent and bills and produces annual financial reports.
8. Member Care Committee supports the sangha by addressing any issues members may have with the sangha or practice and orchestrating the second body practice.

9. Friday Night Study Group is supported by hosts, facilitators and attendees.
10. Sangha Socials are supported by hosts, attendees and good cooks.
11. Public Outreach is a form of applied Buddhism that includes weekly peace vigils, Somali relief efforts, Stillworkers events and Vesak activities. A recent example is a public hour of practice at the Warhol Museum.
12. Personal Practice – supports the sangha as does informal social gatherings around films, music and speakers.

Items for consideration for 2012:

April Retreat 2012

The time scheduled at Kerns for the retreat coincides with the OI/Aspirant retreat, which means that many of the people who generally serve on the committee and work on the retreat will not be present in Pittsburgh. Chan Huy suggested having a series of Days of Mindfulness as it might provide a practice opportunity to people who find the expense or the time commitment of our current format prohibitive. This commuter retreat could be organized in any way the retreat committee (which is currently open for volunteers) chooses. Several people expressed concern about not having enough OI and senior practitioners available. Several others voiced a desire to attract more young people, which could be done by holding one or more of the days on a college campus. The United Cerebral Palsy office at Center and Neville was also suggested. The sangha would also like to attract minority participants.

The OI/Aspirants were polled to get an idea of how many would attend the April retreat in New York and it appeared that many would go and not be in Pittsburgh the weekend in question. However, it was noted that OI could work on committees to help prepare even if they could not attend and that many fine sangha activities are currently offered without OI input. Moreover, retreats and other activities were successfully held in previous years before any members were ordained into OI.

The group was asked to vote yea or nay to holding a commuter retreat or series of consecutive DOM's instead of our standard residential retreat. The majority voted yea to experiment with this new format.

Practice Council

A suggestion was made to form a practice council to support the sangha in several ways. The council could make sure there was a facilitator for each Tuesday night and help train people who want to facilitate or lead a 5MT or 14MT ceremony. The council could also help coordinate Days of Mindfulness by suggesting dates, providing resources and generally looking for ways to improve the quality of our presence. Someone asked if these responsibilities belong to the Member Care Committee, but that committee thought not. No vote was taken but the matter was

referred to the CCC for further exploration and a sign-up sheet posted for interested people.

Other Suggestions

A suggestion was made to celebrate Buddhist Holidays. Our participation in Vesak was offered as a current practice.

A suggestion was made to offer Mindfulness Movements each Tuesday. Last year a meeting of all facilitators came to consensus that each facilitator should have the freedom to set the agenda for their evening and that they are free to collaborate on themes which extend over several Tuesday nights. The minutes from the facilitator meeting are available for review. Another person suggested that we survey the sangha for input. (Following the suggestion, Mindful Movements were offered on November 22nd). The suggestion to add Mindful Movements to the Tuesday night sittings on some sort of regular basis was referred to the CCC for further consideration.

The 501C3 application and days of mindfulness for health care practitioners were taken off of the agenda (by the person who had added them initially.)

Announcements

There were several announcements: a peace vigil was being held that afternoon; Stillworkers was hosting a gathering focused on the Buddhist response to the climate emergency that day.

A small group has formed IAM (Institute of Applied Mindfulness) to offer training to specific audiences in order to take mindfulness into the secular world.

There was a short closing sitting followed by a wonderful potluck lunch.

Sign Ups

A sign up sheet for Tuesday night facilitation was circulated. Anyone who missed the sheet is encouraged to sign up for Days of Mindfulness and Tuesday night facilitation on the LRS website at www.laughingrivers.org. (Bill will let us know when he's posted the existing information so you can see what opportunities are available. If you have not led before or hosted a day of mindfulness, please consult with someone who has about receiving training.)

The results of the committee membership sign up sheet are listed here. People are encouraged to join committees and to talk to the individuals involved for more details.

Continuing Care Committee:

Natalie, Martha, Michael S., Kate, Red, David (?)

Winter Social:

David (?)

Summer Social:
Natalie

Member Care:
Michael M (?), Deborah B (?), Laura, Red (?), Bill (?)

Practice Council:
Red (?), Bill (?), Deborah (?)