

Laughing River Sangha Annual Meeting
December 1, 2012

Moderated by Tony

Attendees: Bonnie, Michael S., David, Deborah, George, Mike M.,
Laura, Martha, Dawn, Kate, Denys, Deb, Red

Minutes: Martha

Tony opened with an invitation to practice throughout the meeting.
The group read the Mindful Meeting Minutes.

Tony pointed out that purpose of this meeting is to focus on
decisions relating to the upcoming year. Questions regarding last
year's activities can be directed to the committee chair or members.
He called our attention to volunteer opportunities on the agenda.

Red invited a bell and we meditated for several minutes.

PRACTICE COUNCIL

Red, Deborah & Bill

The Practice Council is a new group within the Sangha formed as a
result of suggestions at last year's annual meeting. Red explained
that other large sanghas have Practice Councils. Their goal is to
make rich practices which some members learn at national retreats
available to LRS through teaching and mentoring. The Council is
currently coordinating weekly facilitator presentations and gently
aligning topics Chan Huy's presentations with our meeting and
DOMs. They would like to train or mentor aspiring bell masters,
provide instruction on ceremonies, declare member's presence at 5
MT if they can't attend, possibly offer a workshop around helping
people establish a home sitting practice, and identify resource
people within the sangha. They are open to suggestions.

Deborah added the Days of Mindfulness (DOMs) are a recurring topic at our annual meetings – how often, what format, location etc. For example, we could formalize the DOMs and rent space for a full day OR hold two or three smaller ones in people’s homes or both. When asked for a show of hands for formal DOMs, 14 people raised their hands and 6 people expressed willingness to organize. Tony explained that a public DOM would address the need in the community identified during the commuter retreats.

George distributed a proposal for bi-monthly DOMs based around Chan Huy’s dharma talks and offered to do the GoToMeeting part of the DOMs for 6 meetings. Bonnie asked if people can come and go from the dharma talks and David thought that could be a good way to invite people in.

The Practice Council will follow up based on the direction that the Sangha has interest in both small, informal and larger, community-directed DOMs.

Michael S. explained that Newlon is \$150 day and can be rented for a half day and he offered to coordinate with the Center. He felt a few DOMs could be done there for a reasonable fee. Monthly e-talks could still be within the sangha.

STUDY GROUP

Social-cause Mindfulness is an interest of Deb G. who wonders if the Sangha can develop a forum for sharing about ways to reflect Thay’s teachings in our daily lives. Tony suggested that the new CCC focus on possible vehicles for addressing social issues. Red added that anyone in the sangha can just have a pot luck or a DOM or a mindfulness walk without a formal sangha calendar action. David noted that small DOMs help us talk about our lives and might provide a forum for social cause mindfulness and sharing our lives.

SOCIALS

Denys enjoys the opportunity to connect with people's families. He wonders what makes a sangha social different from other holiday parties and how to skillfully balance practice without putting off non-practicioners. George noted that families gather at the monastery and music is a good way to bring the practice into a social. Michael M. noted that being social can be mindful and it's okay sometimes to be together and enjoying one another.

Martha suggested holding the social outdoors somewhere. Red said shelters and cabins are available at Moraine and we could do a peace walk in the woods. We can ask Carlos how families practice together at the Blue Cliff summer retreat.

Tony suggest the CCC work on this in the upcoming year – maybe on a silent social. He noted that there is interest and people can volunteer now or we can elicit volunteers later.

-The Group took a 10 minute break. -

DANA

As chair of the finance committee, Bill will talk about LRS dana in another forum.

Michael S. has undertaken an annual fund drive to support Blue Cliff monastery by contributing to a monastic trust fund that helps provide health care, clothing and travel for monks and nuns. The monastics live off of the interest of the money that is received and invested. A generous member of the global sangha doubles our donation, making our \$500 donation a \$1000 gift.

The Sangha donates to BC annually and Michael will be soliciting individual donations in addition to this offering.

Denys raised questions about the viability of LRS's financial situation. Tony suggested that Bill put forward some suggestions to cover our costs, such as 10 people donate \$5 each week. Michael S. explained the Spring retreat made \$1600 which was partially offset by an increased dana contribution of \$1000 to Chan Huy giving LRS a profit of \$600 for the Spring retreat.

TRIP TO BLUE CLIFF

George talked about how much relationships with the monks has meant to his practice. He would consider renting a van and taking a group up to the Monastery for a work Saturday. George will look into it and share it with the CCC and sangha. This is also a recurring suggestion.

MEMBER CARE COMMITTEE

Michael S. expresses gratitude to all prior members of the Member Care Committee and explained that he and Martha will move to this Committee. Martha asked for input on the needs of the Sangha. Deb G. volunteered to serve, noting that she enjoys 2nd. body and orientations. Tony suggested looking at people with financial problems, physical problems (like moving tree from yard.) Also, social time after the sittings on first Tuesdays may not be serving its purpose for all members. Red offered to review what the previous committee has done and Bonnie offered to share ideas. We can also use the listserv to solicit input.

DHARMA TEACHERS

Michael M. is pleased that Tony is a resident dharma teacher and suggested a Winter and Summer retreat with Tony or other venues for dharma talks. The practice council will review possibilities for Tony and other resident teachers. George suggested Tony could talk during a longer day of mindfulness. Tony has been introducing mindful meditation in the health care system.

This past year Chan Huy has spent additional time week in Pittsburgh and has asked LRS to find opportunities to offer the dharma, which it has through the Rice Bowl, Gateway Rehab and Slippery Rock University. These meetings require coordination beyond that of previous retreat committees and the question was raised whether coordinating these additional events is the responsibility of that committee.

Dawn asked for clarification and Tony asked whether the Sangha wants to support CH's efforts. Michael offered to continue to organize these days as a personal commitment but would appreciate our support.

Red believes the retreat committee has enough to do without also managing CH's additional time. She thinks we should solicit additional help for Michael and ask the Sangha for ideas on venues for Chan Huy.

Michael M. asks if LRS can make money with Chan Huy 's time by guaranteeing him \$2,000 for the week. Slippery Rock helped contribute towards his dana last year.

Michael S. noted that we can also make use of Tony's time in this way.

George asked about the IAM and if it would assume this responsibility. Tony noted that the IAM is dormant.

COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

In response to a member suggestion, it was pointed out that LRS has a flier. We also had a binder with Buddhist information which is missing but can be reassembled.

The membership care committee had addressed the question of a Sangha directory and there were questions about who was a member and who was not and who wanted to be listed. Red will discuss with the new committee.

VOLUNTEERS

George joined the CCC and one retreat team

Mike M. is seriously considering joining CCC. He'll do the bookstore at retreat.

Red will consider being a website volunteer.

Deb volunteered for the residential retreat.

Laura and Michael S. volunteered for the commuter retreat.

Red mentioned the facilitator calendar signup which was circulated at the meeting. Dawn calls New Life about the Jewish holidays and if that will impact the sittings.

Tony and Martha thanked the participants. George suggested we try to get more people to connect even to small volunteer opportunities. David thanked everyone for coming to his home.

Red sounded a final bell at 12:25 and a lovely pot luck lunch was enjoyed by all followed by fabulous chocolate cake.