



December 7, 2014

Dear Still Water Friend,

We are writing to thank you for your participation in and generous contributions to the Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center during the past year. Your gifts have enabled Still Water to expand its activities, take on new responsibilities, and offer the teaching of the Dharma more widely and deeply.

For thousands of years, Buddhist teachers have freely shared the Dharma with all who have sought its wisdom, and Buddhist communities have subsisted on the generosity of their members and supporters. Dana, or generosity, is one of the core teachings of the Dharma. Dana is a gift from the heart that brings joy and benefit to both the giver and the receiver. It offers us the chance to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion in our lives.

Still Water is guided by this ancient tradition and has adopted Dana as its business model. Consequently, Still Water does not charge fees for most of its programs, and, for those events that do entail a fee, offers a sliding scale of payment and scholarships. For over a decade, Still Water has operated completely through monetary donations from its members and friends like you.

Still Water is now in its fifteenth year! Having started as a small group of practitioners that met weekly in an attic in Takoma Park, it now includes groups in Silver Spring, Columbia, Frederick, Sandy Spring, Gaithersburg, and Takoma Park, Maryland, as well as Chevy Chase, DC. About 150 participants sit every week at our various practice sessions. To complement our weekly sittings and Dharma sharings, Still Water also offers days of mindfulness, retreats, classes/workshops, and cultural outings.

In addition to geography-based groups, Still Water is experiencing growth through affinity-based groups. Our Mindful Families group, which includes parents and children, has enjoyed a full roster of activities in the past year, including retreats, days of mindfulness, and mindful feasts. Still Water volunteers continue to help out at Shepherd's Table, a center in Silver Spring that offers meals, clothing, and support to people who are homeless or in need. Practitioners are there on Wednesdays (to help with the Clothes Closet) and on the fourth Sunday (to help with the brunch service). A Mindful Educators group has formed in the past year to support mindfulness education in schools. For the coming year, we are exploring how Still Water might be involved in bringing mindfulness practice into local prisons.

Still Water is also in the process of updating its web site and expanding its presence in social media. We are already sharing the Dharma and announcing Still Water activities on Facebook. You can help by “liking” and following our Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center Facebook page.

Dana helps our community meet many expenses: rent for meeting spaces; buying zafus and zabutons; contributions to Plum Village and other not-for-profit institutions; and a modest compensation for our Senior Teacher, Mitchell Ratner, whose full-time work is to offer the teachings and organize the community with the help of the Still Water Working Group and Board. In 2013, Still Water was able to remunerate Mitchell at about fifty percent of our benchmark, the Fair Compensation guideline for comparable Unitarian Universalist churches.

We would like to ask you to continue to support the work of Still Water and, if possible, to increase your donation. You can do this by enlarging the amount of your monthly contribution, if you are a monthly donor, or making an end-of-year gift to the community. All contributions are tax-deductible. Whichever way you choose to give (see accompanying page for the various options), please know that we respect and value your participation and will use any level of gift in the most conscientious way to continue Still Water’s critical work.

Still Water also welcomes Dana in other forms, including help with planning, organizing, and staffing events, as well as with building and maintaining our online presence. Please let us know if you can assist in these ways. We welcome your skills, insights, and energy! As we all know, it takes much more than money for Still Water to thrive.

At the time of this writing, our beloved and revered teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, is receiving intensive treatment in a Bordeaux hospital after suffering a brain hemorrhage on November 11. The latest communication from the Plum Village Sangha is that Thay is stabilized and peaceful, although his condition remains critical.

Our teacher writes in *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, “Without impermanence, life could not be. ... We think impermanence makes us suffer. The Buddha gave the example of a dog that was hit by a stone and got angry at the stone. It is not impermanence that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not. ... Impermanence is what makes transformation possible. ... Thanks to impermanence, we can change suffering into joy.”

As Thay is always reminding us, this present moment is a wonderful time to deepen our practice, including cultivating our awareness of mindful breathing, sitting, walking, and eating, and participating in our larger community or Sangha. Thank you for your involvement in and support of Still Water and for the work you are doing to change suffering into joy, in your own life and in the world.

In gratitude,
The Still Water Working Group

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