

# Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center

*In a situation of war, practitioners of peace do not take sides. Instead, they promote reconciliation and try to bring the two sides together. This is a very dangerous position to take.*

— Thich Nhat Hanh, *Creating True Peace*

December 6, 2017

Dear Still Water Friend,

We send you end-of-year greetings and deep appreciation for your participation in and support of Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center during 2017. The past year has been one of challenges, re-examination of our vision and aspirations, and renewed intention to be more engaged, inclusive, and awake. Thanks to your support, Still Water continues to be a resource for people seeking a peaceful path through contentious times. We invite you to continue supporting us by sending a year-end gift or becoming a monthly donor.

In 2017 Still Water grappled with how to respond to the climate of fear and divisiveness that followed the presidential election in November 2016. In our Dharma sharings, many people spoke about their shock over the election results and fears about the future. Still Water joined with other area Sanghas to march peacefully in the Women's March on Washington in January and the People's Climate March in April. The day before the Women's March, Still Water hosted an evening of mindfulness and reflection, including Dharma talks on peaceful engaged practice, that was attended by about 110 people, many of whom had traveled to Washington DC for the march. In the spring, sixteen practitioners participated in a six-week study group on engaged mindfulness practice, led by our senior teacher, Mitchell Ratner.



*Women's March on Washington, January 2017*

Realizing that our practitioners are not monolithic in their political views, Still Water has affirmed our intention to welcome all sincere practitioners, regardless of their political affiliations. You can read Still Water's statement on engaged practice on the enclosed card and on our website, [StillWaterMPC.org](http://StillWaterMPC.org).

The cycle of Still Water activities — regular sittings, days of practice, retreats, and classes — continues and expands. Now in its eighteenth year, Still Water offers gatherings for meditation and sharing fourteen times each week at eight different locations in Maryland. Close to two hundred participants join us for practice each week.

Still Water's Free Where You Are Prison Mindfulness Community leads weekly meditation sessions in three Maryland prisons. Still Water volunteers continue to help out at Shepherd's Table, which provides services for homeless people in Silver Spring. Our Mindful Families Community is exploring new ways to support parents, teens, and children in bringing mindfulness practices into their daily lives; and our Spanish-Speaking Sangha,

Contemplando una Flor de Loto, continues to offer meditation and Dharma sharing in Spanish to the Latino community in downtown Silver Spring.



*Still Water Volunteers with Staff  
at Shepherd's Table, Dec. 2016*

Mitchell recently likened Still Water to an incubator. Just as a tech incubator supports new businesses trying to get off the ground, Still Water supports people who aspire to practice in the Plum Village tradition and to extend their practice through helpful actions in the world. Out of this mix of people practicing together in a supportive and safe environment, new things can arise. For example, our prison meditation initiative came into being because one of our members, an attorney, had often visited clients in prisons and had seen the suffering of people there. Also, our Spanish-Speaking Sangha has manifested because of the efforts of two practitioners who wanted to make the practice available to their community in their first language.

In financial matters, Still Water is guided by the tradition of Dana, or generosity — a gift from the heart that brings joy and benefit to both the giver and the receiver. Still Water does not charge fees for its weekly programs and most special events, and offers a sliding scale of payment and scholarships for events that require a fee. These policies make it possible for people to practice with us regardless of their ability to pay. Still Water has always been supported entirely through voluntary donations from its members and friends. All contributions are tax-deductible. In recent years, contributions have been trending downward; in view of this, please be assured that any donation you are able to make will be deeply appreciated.



*Walking Meditation in Rock Creek Park,  
November 2017*

Dana allows our community to meet its many expenses, including rent for gathering and retreat spaces; the purchase of books, meditation cushions and mats, and other materials; contributions to Plum Village and other not-for-profit institutions; remuneration for our guest teachers; and a modest salary for our senior teacher, Mitchell Ratner, whose full-time work is to offer the teachings and organize the community with the support of the Working Group and Board. We also welcome Dana in other forms, including help with planning, organizing, and staffing events, as well as with building and maintaining our online and social media presence. Please let us know if you can assist in these ways.

Your support has made it possible for Still Water to be an incubator of good things for the world. We appreciate your contribution in whatever amount or form it takes. Please see the attached pages for more information on how to donate and how your contribution will be used.

In the prisons, Still Water volunteers often end our sittings with this Metta meditation, which we learned from Michael Nguyen, formerly Brother Michael. These words seem like good ones for the road ahead:

*May all beings be safe. May all beings be happy. May we have strength to meet whatever arises. May our days unfold with ease.*

In gratitude,

The Still Water Working Group

*Abbie Chessler, Carlos Munoz, Connie Anderson, Eliza King, Gene Klinger, Lori Perine, Mitchell Ratner, Rachel Phillips-Anderson, Scott Schang, Tim McCormack*

# Engaged Practice and the Still Water Community

***Mindfulness must be engaged. Once there is seeing, there must be acting. Otherwise, what is the use of seeing? -- Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace is Every Step***

As a community of practice in the Plum Village tradition, the Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center aspires to be an inclusive community that embodies three core values: mindfulness, compassion, and community.

Mindfulness is the awareness and transformation of not only our own suffering, but of the suffering around us. Therefore, we will look deeply into our society and will speak out against injustice and oppression. We will offer beneficial services and spiritual support to those who are at risk or who have been harmed. We will strive to change such situations by joining others in nonviolent movements and direct actions that genuinely have as their aim justice, reconciliation, peace, and love.

In pursuing engaged practice, Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center will not support political parties or causes or take sides in political disputes. We welcome into our community all people who support the three values at the core of our community regardless of their personal characteristics, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or political beliefs.

We encourage loving speech and compassionate listening at all our gatherings as we endeavor to embody Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching that no one is our enemy, even in the midst of partisan conflicts. We will endeavor to understand deeply the views and suffering of those with whom we disagree just as we endeavor to understand our own views and suffering. We know that there is no way to peace, and that as a community we must show that peace is the way.

# STILL WATER MINDFULNESS PRACTICE CENTER

## Frequently Asked Questions About Dana

### **What are my contributions used for?**

The continued vitality of the community depends on those who participate and share our vision. Dana pays for room charges and other community expenses; supports our Senior Teacher, whose work is to offer the teachings and to organize the community; allows us to make most Still Water events open to everyone regardless of ability to pay; and helps us make contributions to Plum Village and other institutions that spiritually support us.

### **Who sets and manages Still Water's budget?**

Still Water is overseen by a Board of Directors (currently Abbie Chessler, Mitchell Ratner, Tim McCormack, and Scott Schang) that has legal responsibility for Still Water's finances. A Working Group has chief responsibility for implementing Still Water's day-to-day operations. Together, these groups set Still Water's budget based on what we can raise and our expenses. Our largest expense, the stipend for Still Water's Senior Teacher, is benchmarked against the median Fair Compensation Guideline for Unitarian Universalist churches with congregations of fewer than 150 members. Currently, our Senior Teacher's compensation is about fifty percent of that benchmark.

### **Are my contributions tax-deductible?**

Yes. Still Water MPC is a 501 (c)(3) religious corporation under Federal tax law, and donations qualify as charitable contributions. If you make \$100 or more in attributable donations in a year, Still Water will send you an acknowledgement letter the following February, verifying the total tax-deductible contributions received in the previous year.

### **How can I make a one-time donation or become a monthly donor?**

You can fill out the form on the back of this page, or you can make a donation or become a monthly donor on the Still Water website—[www.stillwatermpc.org](http://www.stillwatermpc.org). Just click on “Donate” and then click on “Donate Now” or “Become a Monthly Donor.”

### **How large a contribution is appropriate?**

Every Dana contribution is a personal decision influenced by many factors. A traditional answer to the question “How much?” is “Give until your heart is full.” Please know that every gift is appreciated and every practitioner is treasured. The suggested donation to the Dana basket at one of our evening sittings is \$10 or more; therefore, for convenience, regular attendees often enroll as monthly donors at \$50 or \$60 per month. Recognizing the many contributions Still Water makes to their lives and the wider world, many Still Water practitioners give more. Currently, the range of our monthly donations is from \$20 to \$350.

### **In what ways can I make monthly donations?**

**Online bill pay:** You can set up one time or regular payments to Still Water MPC through your bank's bill pay service. (Cost to you: usually zero. Cost to us: zero.) Just tell your bank the amount, how often, and to send payment to Still Water MPC, P.O. Box 11360, Takoma Park, MD 20913.

**Paper check:** You can send a check each month or quarter. (Cost to you: stamps, time, and memory strain. Cost to us: zero.)

**Online credit card payment:** You can make a one time or recurring donation on the Still Water website, using your credit card or PayPal. (Cost to you: zero. Cost to us: a transaction fee of about 2.5 percent with Paypal.)

Questions? Email [info@StillWaterMPC.org](mailto:info@StillWaterMPC.org) or call 301 270-8353.

Dear Still Water MPC:

- ☐ I would like to become a Monthly Donor. I wish to pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month to support Still Water programs.
- ☐ I am already a Monthly Donor. I wish to increase my pledge to \$\_\_\_\_\_ per month. (If you wish to maintain your current pledge, we thank you and there is no need to return this form.)
- ☐ I enclose a one-time contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Scholarship Fund, which makes it possible for Still Water practitioners of limited means to attend our retreats and other retreats offered in the Plum Village tradition.
- ☐ I would like to donate appreciated stock – please contact me.
- ☐ I would like to offer my skills, insights, and efforts in the following way:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have moved or changed your phone number or email, please let us know.

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send this form and your donation to:

Still Water MPC, P.O. Box 11360, Takoma Park, MD 20913.

Thank you!

All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.