

December 8, 2015

Dear Still Water Friend,

The past year at the Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center has been one of expansion, innovation, and exploration. Thank you for your participation in and generous contributions to Still Water during this year. Your gifts have enabled Still Water to take on new responsibilities and offer the teaching of the Dharma more widely and deeply. We are very excited about the new initiatives Still Water has undertaken in the past months:



Prison Meditation Project: In June 2015, Still Water launched its Prison Meditation Project. Since July, a group of Still Water volunteers has been facilitating twice-monthly meditation sessions at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women (MCIW) in Jessup, Maryland. Volunteers have been sharing sitting and walking meditation and Dharma sharing with women incarcerated there. In 2016, we hope to expand the program at MCIW to offer additional meditation sessions for correctional officers and staff. We also anticipate expanding the project to other correctional facilities in Central Maryland. If you are interested in learning more about the project or volunteering, please email [info@stillwatermpc.org](mailto:info@stillwatermpc.org).

Spanish-speaking Sangha: A new Spanish-speaking group is meeting at the Silver Spring Library twice a month. The group is working to make mindfulness teachings accessible to Spanish-speaking participants and provide an opportunity for them to share in their native language.

Climate Change Initiative: Several Still Water practitioners took the online course “EcoSattva Training” offered by One Earth Sangha in the fall of 2015. An ongoing group within Still Water is coming into being to study and understand the ramifications of climate change and to explore a Buddhist response to climate change.

Relationship with the Israeli Sangha: In 2015 Still Water worked with the Israeli Sangha to raise funds to enable two Palestinian peace activists and their families to spend three weeks of the summer at Plum Village. The Israeli and Palestinian Sanghas have recently extended an invitation to our senior teacher, Mitchell Ratner, to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories to teach and lead a retreat in the fall of 2016. We hope that ten to fifteen experienced Still Water practitioners will be able to accompany Mitchell.

New Still Water Website: As Still Water has grown and expanded its scope of activities, we have felt the need to have a more user-friendly, interactive, and versatile website. Since the spring of 2015 we have been working with designer Holly Halverson of HH Graphics to build the new site. Watch for its debut in mid-December!

Now in its sixteenth year, Still Water is home to seven practice groups that meet in various locations in Maryland. This year we’ve welcomed a new group, Still Water on the Chesapeake, that meets in West River and Annapolis. The ongoing groups in Silver Spring, Columbia, Frederick, Sandy Spring, Gaithersburg, and Takoma Park continue to thrive. Close to two hundred participants sit every week at our various practice sessions. To complement our weekly sittings and Dharma

sharings, Still Water offers days of mindfulness, retreats, classes/workshops, and cultural outings throughout the year. Several affinity-based groups are also active in Still Water, such as the Mindful Families group; the Mindful Educators group; the volunteers at Shepherd's Table, a center in Silver Spring that offers meals, clothing, and support to people who are homeless or in need; the new Prison Meditation Project; and the new Spanish-speaking Sangha. We are also expanding our presence on social media; you can follow and "like" Still Water on Facebook.

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. Still Water does not charge fees for most of its programs and offers a sliding scale of payment and scholarships for events that do entail a fee. Since it began, Still Water has operated completely through monetary donations from its members and friends.

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 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 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 becoming a monthly donor, enlarging the amount of your contribution (if you are already 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.

In the past year, people all over the world have suffered greatly, in so many different ways. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and despairing in the face of so much suffering. Our teacher Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that every moment is a time to come home to ourselves by practicing mindful breathing, sitting, walking, and eating; by generating the energies of understanding, peace and compassion; and by 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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