



December 10, 2019

Dear Still Water Friends,

Thank you for your support of the Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center.

This year Still Water is celebrating its 20th year. Before there was a Still Water, there were morning meditation groups on Wednesdays and Fridays at Crossings in Takoma Park, as well as occasional introduction to mindfulness classes. In 1998 Thich Nhat Hanh encouraged practitioners to organize mindfulness practice centers. The intention was to give mindfulness practice a new face. In order to follow in the steps of the Buddha, one didn't need to chant in an Asian language or replicate Asian forms of worship. One "simply" needed to commit to being present and engaged with what was actually arising in oneself and around oneself.

For the group in Takoma Park, becoming a mindfulness practice center seemed to make good sense. The name "Still Water" was chosen and officially came into being on January 1, 1999. The weekly schedule was expanded to include a third morning and a weekly evening of mindfulness practice. At first the gatherings were very small — often the evening sessions had two or three people. However, within two years a committed core group of practitioners considered Still Water their spiritual home. In addition to the ongoing morning and evening groups, Still Water began offering social events, retreats, and classes for experienced practitioners.

One of the reasons Still Water grew was the type of mindfulness practice Plum Village tradition offers. Thich Nhat Hanh calls it engaged Buddhism. In a 2008 talk in Hanoi, he explained:

When we speak about engaged Buddhism, we speak first of a kind of Buddhism that is present in our daily life at every moment. When [people] hear about engaged Buddhism, they think of fighting for social justice, fighting for human rights, organizing demonstrations, and so on. But that is not true. That is part of the practice, but not the basic part. The basic part is to have the practice alive in every moment of your daily life. You should be there in order to attend to what is happening in the here and now, in the realm of the body, the realm of the mind, the realm of environment.

From the beginning there was an energy in Still Water to make the practice of mindfulness available to more people. Building practice communities was seen as a form of activism. If more people were mindful, loving, and compassionate, these qualities would penetrate into our politics, our responses to those in need, our caretaking of the earth, and would catalyze changes in countless other ways.

The branching of Still Water began around 2005 when some experienced practitioners asked if they could start a group in Columbia, Maryland, and still be part of Still Water. That worked well and soon there were other Still Water groups, including a group meeting at a senior home in Sandy Spring, a new morning group in Takoma Park, and ongoing groups in Annapolis and Gaithersburg. (When Crossings moved to Silver Spring, the Takoma Park evening and morning groups moved with them.) In the past few years Still Water has added evening and morning groups at Blueberry Gardens in Ashton, a Spanish-speaking group in Silver Spring, and a fledgling online group. In 2020 Still Water will welcome Still Water Kent Island on the Eastern Shore.

Helping to keep Still Water moving along are a Board of Directors (overseeing legal and financial issues), a Working Group (planning, implementing, and evaluating Still Water-wide events), a Senior Teacher, and more than a hundred practitioners who facilitate and assist with the local groups, lead classes, organize and host social events, help with administrative tasks (bookkeeping, announcements, and event registration), and volunteer with Still Water at Shepherd's Table in Silver Spring.

While Still Water has expanded, and our collective practice has deepened, the Working Group is aware that there are still many issues that need addressing. How can Still Water as a community more clearly articulate a response to the challenges of our time, including climate change, injustice, and inequality? And how might Still Water be more welcoming and inclusive in our groups and events? If you have reflections, suggestions, or readings that might assist the Working Group and others as they consider these questions, please email them to [WorkingGroup@StillWaterMPC.org](mailto:WorkingGroup@StillWaterMPC.org) or bring them to the attention of a Working Group member.

As has been true since its inception, Still Water is guided in financial matters by the tradition of Dana, or generosity — a gift from the heart that brings joy and benefit to both the giver and the receiver. Dana enables 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 stipend for our full-time senior teacher, Mitchell Ratner.

Additionally, Dana enables Still Water to offer regular meditation sessions and many other events free of charge. For fee-based events, we provide a sliding scale of payment and scholarships so that people can practice with us regardless of their ability to pay.

We invite you to continue supporting Still Water by sending a year-end gift or becoming a monthly donor. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. We also welcome Dana in non-monetary forms, including help with planning, organizing, and staffing events, as well as with building and maintaining our online and social media presence. Please see the attached page for more information on how to donate and how your contribution will be used.

*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

Carlos Munoz, Connie Anderson, Dan Demmitt, Eliza King, Eric Donaldson, Gene Klinger, Lori Perine, Mitchell Ratner, Rachel Phillips-Anderson, and Shawna Donaldson

# 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, Rachel Phillips-Anderson, 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 forty 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 “Donation Page” 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. 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: 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.

**Direct Deposit from your checking account through ACH bank Transfer:** Similar to online bill payment, but it is done electronically without an actual check. (Cost to you: zero. Cost to us: one percent. However, the bookkeeping is much easier than with checks.) You can set up recurring direct deposits on our Still Water Donation Page.

**Handwritten checks to the Still Water MPC:** Of course you can write checks to the Still Water MPC. Each month (or quarter, half-year, or year) you can mail a check to the address above, or you can drop a check in the Dana Basket at any Still Water MPC event. Please indicate in the note section that the contribution is part of a monthly pledge. (Cost to you: stamps, time, and memory strain. Cost to us: zero.)

**Online credit card payment:** *You can make a one time or recurring credit card donation on our Still Water Donation Page. (Cost to you: zero. Cost to us: a transaction fee of about three percent.)*

**Donation of appreciated stock or transfers from retirement accounts:** *For some people the donation of appreciated stock or transfers from a retirement account are the most tax efficient way to make a contribution to Still Water. If you would like to explore this possibility, please contact Still Water MPC at (301) 270 8353 or [Info@StillWaterMPC.org](mailto:Info@StillWaterMPC.org).*

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.