



December 10, 2020

Dear Still Water Friend,

Thich Nhat Hanh's calligraphy is simple and powerful. The meaning, however, depends on the beholder and the context. For the Still Water MPC in March of 2020, the message was stark: because of the coronavirus pandemic, no matter what we expected or preferred, we could not continue as we were used to. Meeting in person sixteen times a week at eight locations in Maryland was clearly no longer safe. Within three weeks, fifteen of the sixteen gatherings were converted to online Zoom meetings.

During those weeks of transition, many Still Water practitioners assisted the effort. More than thirty facilitators needed to be trained as Zoom hosts, and Still Water received technical and programmatic assistance from members of the international Plum Village community and also offered support to mindfulness communities across North America as well as in Australia, England, Germany, Ireland, and Scotland.

And while we were still learning, Still Water also added two new online groups:

- a Friday evening Open-to-All group primarily oriented to Still Water friends who had not been participating in our local Maryland gatherings.
- a first and third Wednesday night group – The Art of Mindfulness – oriented to those in the early stages of developing a mindfulness practice.

The death of George Floyd in May, and the ensuing nationwide outcry against violent, racially-biased policing, brought the Still Water community to another "This is it" moment. Floyd's death and many other instances of police misconduct over the past several years have led many of us to reassess our understanding of America's racial history and to open our eyes to the ways racial harm continues in our society through racist policies and institutions. We are asking ourselves, What qualities of presence and action do we, as mindfulness practitioners, want to bring to this moment of national awakening around race and racism?

The Still Water Working Group, consisting of members from most of our ongoing groups, is taking steps to respond to this question. An Ending Racism Study Group, consisting of interested Working Group members, has been regularly meeting since July. The group's mission is to help

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its members look deeply at our racial conditioning, attitudes, and biases and to explore how Still Water might address race within our sangha groups.

The full Working Group has since July also been working on a clear statement on race that will guide the Still Water community in developing new groups, classes, and programs. The Working Group recently gave its approval to this iteration:

Committing Ourselves To Ending Racism

As a spiritual community we aspire to end racism in all its manifestations. We commit ourselves to:

- understanding the origins and consequences of racism.
- identifying and transforming the racism that exists in our individual consciousnesses, in our community, and in the larger society.
- co-creating an inclusive community, country, and world in which all feel welcomed.
- offering financial and other support to organizations working to end racism.

The Working Group looks forward to receiving comments on this statement and to working with members of the Still Water community to transform ourselves, our community, and our world.

Throughout this difficult and stressful year, the Still Water MPC has endeavored to serve its core purpose, “To nourish the seeds of mindfulness, compassion, and community in individuals, families, and the larger society.”

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 Still Water to offer without charge our ongoing meditation and Dharma sharing sessions, community events (such as our New Year’s Brunch – online this year), and many special events (such as our Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission Preparatory classes).

Dana enables our community to meet its many expenses, including paying for website development and maintenance; online participant, event, and financial data bases; purchasing community supplies; contributing to other non-profits (such as Plum Village, Shepherd’s Table, and The Equal Justice Initiative); offering remuneration for guest teachers; and a modest stipend for our full-time senior teacher, Mitchell Ratner.

We invite you to begin, or continue, to support Still Water by sending a year-end donation 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

Barbra Esher, Beth Gingold, Beth Walton, Carlos Munoz, Connie Anderson, Dan Demmitt, Eliza King, Eric Donaldson, Jonathan Neeley, Lori Perine, Mitchell Ratner, Rachel Phillips-Anderson

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 contribute \$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 make a donation or become a monthly donor on the [Donation Page of the Still Water website](#).

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 a one time, monthly, or regular 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 Still Water (P.O. Box 11360, Takoma Park, MD 20913), or (when we are gathering again in person) you can drop a check in the Dana Basket at any Still Water MPC event. Please indicate in the note

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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

How can I offer my skills, insights, and efforts to Still Water?

[Send Still Water an email](#) detailing how you would like to contribute.

Questions? Email info@StillWaterMPC.org or call 301 270-8353.

