

**Still Mountain Community Meeting Minutes**  
**September 13, 2015**

**AGENDA**

Welcome/Introductions	(facilitator)	Sarah
Review Ground Rules		Sarah
Board Report		Hugh
Announcements		Everyone
Buddhists for Racial Justice		Jackie
Still Mountain Year in Review		David
Community Chaplaincy Discussion		David

21 people attending

**Board of Directors Vacancies**

- Three people are leaving the board at end of the year (Jim, Yair, Anita).
- We need volunteers to replace them.
- Board meetings are every other month for about an hour. There is not a lot of administration left to do (have liability insurance in place, legal structures in place). The Board primarily maintains community finances.
- The Board meetings are chaired by the President. There is an agenda that is compiled prior to the meeting but items may also be added at the meeting. The Secretary takes minutes which are subsequently posted to the Still Mountain website. Decisions are based on a majority vote, but every effort is made to reach a consensus on major issues.

**Web Site - Hugh**

- We now have needs for more functionality and space on our website. We now have 6 pages available and they are getting very cluttered.
- We are currently paying FatCow Web Hosting \$5/month.
- We propose to obtain more available pages and obtain additional functionality which will enable us to embed videos and hold discussions.
- The fee would increase to \$10/month. We are asking community to approve paying the additional dollars per month.
- Everyone present approved the additional expenditure.

**Finances - Hugh**

Finance report by Hugh

- SM has \$1980 in bank
- Summary of expenses and income:
  - Starting Balance \$3000
  - Income - \$150
  - Corporate Filing (annually) - \$20
  - Liabilities - \$280 + \$720 due to Turner (April, May, June) - when the bill comes in.

- Ending Balance \$1980 / (\$980 available - \$1000 is minimum balance is required in account)

### **Classes** - Teachers

See link for details: <http://stillmountainmeditation.org/programs--classes.html>

- Beginning Meditation for Mindful Aging - Tuesdays, 9:30 am at Turner - formal class - fee is dana - Teachers - Mary & Bilha
- Practicing Meditation with Instructions; Mondays-3:30-5:00 p.m. at Turner - not a formal class - dana - offering space for anyone at any level (not total beginners - at least one class) - mindfulness, loving-kindness, basic meditations. Time for sharing. Ongoing. Teachers: Mary & Bilha
- Small Ongoing Meditation Group meets every other Tuesday evening - 6:30-8:00.  
Were originally participants from a class. Now open to anyone who wants to sit, share, talk about practice. Open to anyone that wants group support. Meets at downtown library or at a home, if library is not open. Led by: Ericka
- Insight Meditation - the Practice of Happiness, Pioneer, Rec & Ed - Tuesdays, 7-9:00 p.m. Teacher: David Lawson.
- Hearing the Dhamma / Practicing the Dhamma - Practice/Study Group Session - Select Thursdays, Turner, 7:00-9:00, Teacher: David - Last year was Tuesday & Thursday. This year, just Thursday. Thursday Sept. 10 will meet to hear Gary Snyder at White Lotus Farms at 7:00 p.m. David wants to include more about "reading between the lines like in poetry and art" this year. Gary Snyder does some of this.
- Local Offerings of Interest: Self Compassion by Kristin Nueff - offering self compassion. Oct 23 at Rackham auditorium - all day. \$240

### **Still Mountain Fall Retreat**

- Details and registration at: <http://stillmountainmeditation.org/programs--classes.html>
- Oct 16-18 - Friday evening to Sunday afternoon
- There are 2 residential spaces open - bring own bedding.
- No commuter slots available at this time.
- Meals are provided. They are vegetarian and Gluten Free. Contact Sarah ([sarah@gocoho.org](mailto:sarah@gocoho.org)) if you have other food sensitivities.
- Dana basis for the whole retreat and teaching. Estimate of Still Mountain costs for residential and commuter will be in the information letter sent to those who register will be sent out by email this week.
- Need people to help prepare food on Thursday, Oct. 15 10am-3:00pm at Great Oak. Do not need to be a retreat participant. Can participate for as many hours as you want. Contact Sarah if you're interested.

## **Buddhists for Racial Justice Website** - Jackie

- Website owners developed a letter titled “Call to White Buddhists” ([www.buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-white-buddhists](http://www.buddhistsforracialjustice.org/call-to-white-buddhists)) in response to the massacre in North Carolina.
- It was sent out to the Still Mountain social list.
- SM sangha member, Jackie Miller, has done anti-racists practice herself and wants to integrate this more with her practice. She asked the group if anyone is interested in working with the points in the “Call to White Buddhists” paper. The points fall under 4 areas -
  - 1) Commit to self-education
  - 2) Engage in facilitated group work
  - 3) Promote structural change within our Dharma communities
  - 4) Build collaborative relationships with people of color.
- Discussion comments:
  - How about a study group monthly or bimonthly?
  - Some local teachers attended a Buddhist Teachers workshop at Omega recently. A whole day was devoted to racism. It was very impactful. There were exercises to help make it real.
  - I’ve been going back and forth to Still Point Zen Buddhist Center in Detroit to explore how they did it and begin to see what we can learn from them.
  - Some people want to read the website first to find out more.
  - Questions about why “Call to Whites” - why not other racial groups? Jackie said that they felt it was necessary first step to make it safe for others. Some Buddhists want to overcome labels and identifications and feel this may do the opposite. The website group feels we are not ready yet for this.
  - I’m interested but not sure in what way. Would like to work with concept of “the Other”. Being with belief systems that is structured within me about “other”. would like to investigate that within me - more interior work and less activist
  - For me this raises all kinds of things about the fluidity of identity and that for many people she is “the other”. Affirmation action - privileged or not - that is an issue. Interested in doing the internal work around this. The activist part is very complicated.
  - Jackie said the information in the “Call Paper” is mostly about internal work.
  - For me there is no difference in separation between internal work and activism. It is a practice of awareness. Mind works in a way where we see things and ascribe meaning to it. This is not necessarily reality. We can watch with awareness.
  - I think that in an age of globalization, there are a lot of in-groups and out-groups depending where you live, etc. All the categories are melting and borders are going away. •
  - I would like more focus on diversity in general, like prison outreach where one is involved deeply with different populations. Experiences like these

bring it from the head to the heart. It sinks in on a whole different level getting to know other's life stories.

- I understand necessity of working with "Call to White Buddhists". And we would need to be careful about the title as it could be misinterpreted.
- Maybe it would be best to wait to work with this until later planned papers on "Call to action for people of color or something similar", which is apparently planned sometime, are published.
- I read an interesting book that is an eye—opener. It speaks about how prior to late 1600s the white race did not exist.
- Next Steps: People who indicated interest: Bilha, Mary G., Sarah, David, Sandy)
- Jackie will Email these people to schedule a first meeting.
- This group will report back to the sangha and continue to invite other members
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### **Still Mountain Year in Review - David - *Its been an Amazing year.***

David commented on how he was noticing everyone's beautiful hands. Noticing what those hands have contributed over the last year. He feels a lot of Gratitude.

#### 2014 Accomplishments

- Jan, 2014 - Initial Planning Group began to meet and came up with a the name Still Mountain and defined the Mission.
- Formed Board - Hugh carried over from Initial Planning Group
- Formed Teacher Group - Bilha, Sandra (moving out of town soon) David, Hugh, Jim, Ericka, Mary
- Jason Siff workshop last summer (secular Vipassana, different approach-exploration of thoughts) - Chose him to help begin providing a bigger holder for teachings of Vipassana.
- Sunday sitting started with 3-5 people, new people started showing up. Simple process for Sunday: sit, discussion of inward and outward practice
- Community Meetings - Led by volunteers and it is working out great
- Study Group with David - started
- Classes at Turner Senior Center - Mary & Bilha started offering
- Classes in Plymouth - Hugh offering through Plymouth Rec & Ed
- Classes in Ann Arbor - Jim & Hugh offering through Ann Arbor Rec & Ed
- Sitting Group - Led by Erika
- Website created - Website is beautiful - well laid out, simple, elegant. Carola, Kay, Hugh, Simon did a lot of work to create it and maintain it.
- FUTURE PLANS IN THE WORKS:
  - Teacher Training starting in 2016-1Q
  - Fall Retreats - starting this year. Also, beginning discussion of a non-residential retreat earlier in the year.
  - Retreat/Workshop with Shaila Catherine
    - (<http://www.imsb.org/about-us/founder-and-principal-teacher-shaila-catherine/>)
    - will come in Oct, 2016 to teach

- concentration practices that can give rise to experiencing states of Jhana. This practice is sometimes not thought valuable in Theravada traditions
- article about Shaila Catherine:
  - <http://www.imsb.org/teachings/written-teachings-articles-and-interviews/settle-into-bliss-an-interview-with-shaila-catherine/>
- Inviting Linda Modaro who teaches with Jason Siff
- A lot of other venues are open. We will explore additional venues for teaching besides Ann Arbor and Plymouth Rec & Ed and Turner Senior Center

### Chaplaincy Project Interest

- David is in a chaplaincy program out west.
  - Chaplaincy - lending of a robe/piece of clothing, something one would otherwise wear, then there is community.
    - Coming along side - not working from a superior position, walking side by side. David has to do a project.
    - Key Question: Am I moving into relationship or out of relationship?
  - In this country, examples are end of life care and prison work.
- David is really excited about working as a sangha, or as individuals or in a small group on addressing "How to bring our practice into a more outward focus" and How this could further the sangha.
- Glassman said that when his sangha worked with this, the sangha started to gel more. It is less "I love you and you love me and we are in this sangha" and more of the expression of the larger sangha. He has been thinking about paying more attention to the fluidity between inward and outward practice. And how possibly a Theravada community could take more of an outward look. He is not saying that there is anything wrong with current approaches. He has been thinking about Who and What to we (Still Mountain) want to be, would like to become and is letting size percolate on its own - letting the question be by itself for a while.
- Questions David has been proposing to himself to think about and would like to discuss with the group:
  - People have the urge to help others based largely on unmet personal needs - does not mean not do a project - just understand the inner part of what wants to do outwardly in projects
  - How the teachings on Dependent Origination and Emptiness inform our practice - how they can help relieve possible burn-out
  - How we find meaning
  - Bernie Glassman - How to nourish Sangha and how to do so from an aspect of "not knowing". Outward meditation can be a way to settle into a non-conceptual way of knowing. It may help more than in just sitting.
  - How work with our addiction to crisis
  - How we develop morality, spirituality ([needs clarification](#))
  - How to see other's wholeness

- How to nourish humility
- Of primary focus - How when working in internal / external channel grounds we can burn up what is not needed
- Examples of Chaplaincy projects
  - Creating a labyrinth for a community - working with this as a spiritual practice
  - Creating a garden
  - Addressing climate change issues, person is a consultant to the U.N.
- Discussion - Comments
  - Form of it that is not certified
  - Some would like to do this
  - How we could meet together (Sundays would work for David and not for some others)?
  - Who would like to do this?
  - How, at these meetings, work through what we want
  - Possibility outside speakers and for David to share what he is learning
  - Very interested in learning about what people are doing
  - How is this different than volunteering mindfully? Can practice to be less “sticky”.
  - What are our unmet needs?
  - How would we use these teachings to help?
  - Projects that the sangha works on also supports the sangha gelling together
  - Broadening mindfulness in the community
  - Breaks down self and other lines - practice - like when lend clothing one would otherwise wear
  - Build community beyond the sangha on the intention of the sangha
  - Supportive housing agency in town - housed in affordable (Avalon) support services available - no rules to get in. Uses volunteers a get. Property on Davis street - most have chronic homelessness, mental issues - could build a relationship with them and the residents; other properties are more family oriented. Find out what they need, find out how we could partner with them.
  - Mentoring youth - e.g. homework help – kind of fun
  - Room in this concept for the Racial... we have talked about
  - More like being a father, mother, sister, brother, uncle - lend garment when needed then they give back to you because you need it too
  - Like Thích Nhất Hạnh- can't just sit here - need to help
  - Totally Interested - time is limited - Sunday may be too much
  - Have it be part of community meeting. It is key to what we do.
  - Need more time for discussion
  - Need time to percolate on this - leaning toward building a relationship with an organization or service. Like, just Being present rather than teaching, e.g. Huron Woods (dementia center at St. Joes) volunteers just

listen and sing along with one person - they won't remember - just be present

- Share emerging thoughts via a Community Blog (this feature can be available)
- Next Steps - devote a large amount of time at the next community meeting
- Interested in participating: Sarah, Mariko, Bilha and others

Note taker: Anna Marie Henrich