

PROGRAMS OF THE M.M.C.

Retreats

An essential form of practice is that of renunciation which is most often taken as a form of retreat. The MMC and its satellite centers offer regular retreats throughout the year. Retreats Vary from beginners to advanced practitioners and are usually a day to a week in duration. Retreats are often regular 'Zen' retreats, or they may focus on a particular Sutta, Sutra, or other teaching. There are also special retreats such as Women's and Men's retreats. Please consult the Program schedule for times and places of retreats.

Dharma Families Program

The foundation of society is the family. To that end, the MMC tries to incorporate as many family programs as possible. These programs vary from simple outings, to group music, hiking, and picnics. These programs encourage whole families to discover the joy of 'being' a family, and allows for several families to draw on their respective experience with regard to parenting and living mindfully in an increasingly unmindful world. The program is for practicing Buddhists and their non-Buddhist family members. For more information please contact Gary Link, Dharma Families Director at 1-845-225-1862.

Dharma Rain Communications

For a family or community to grow or prosper it must be able to communicate and draw on the collective experience. In the Sutras it states that the Dharma rains down on sentient beings and each takes from the rain what it is capable of absorbing.

To meet his need the MMC has this website, a transcription program, and a dharma pen-pal program. The Director of this Program is Diane Greenwald. She can be contacted at dgreenwald@danburylibrary.org.

Ocean Seal Library (Hai An Library)

To compliment the Middle-Way Peace Order, and for general purposes, there is a library of Buddhism at the MMC. It features a collection of over three hundred volumes covering Theravda, Mahayana, and Vajrayana as well as variety of books in Buddhist history, philosophy, and art. It also includes some rare translations of Suttas, Sutras and other texts.

The library is a lending library, though some books are restricted. If you are interested in the library please contact Rev. Wisdom at 203-791-8611.

MiddleWay Peace Order Dharmacarya Training Program

"Vimalakirti replied, 'Sisters [and Brothers], there is a door of the Dharma called "The Inexhaustible

Lamp.” Practice it! What is it? Sisters [and Brothers], a single lamp, may light hundreds of thousands of lamps without itself being diminished. Likewise, Sisters [and Brothers], a single bodhisattva may establish many hundreds of thousands of living beings in enlightenment without his mindfulness being diminished. In fact, not only does it not diminish, it grows stronger. Likewise, the more you teach and demonstrate virtuous qualities to others, the more you grow with respect to virtuous qualities. This is the door of the Dharma called “The Inexhaustible Lamp.”

From the Vimalakirtinirdesa [Brackets indicate added text]

The Middle-Way Peace Order is a Dharma Studies program established primarily to lead to ordination as a Dharmacarya; something equitable to a Lay Minister.

The root training at the MMC is the Dhyana school. The Dhyana school is considered to have been established by Bodhidharma, a monk from India, in China. Dhyana focuses on direct realization through both formal meditation and meditation in daily life.

In China the tradition is referred to as Ch’an. As this tradition spread it went to Korea where it is called Son, Vietnam where it is called Thien, and Japan where it is called Zen. Each of these traditions had arrived in America.

Through the years this school has acquired the wonderful flavors of Asian cultures it has come into contact with. As the Dhyana traditions of the respective Asian cultures meet here in the United States, they have been able to inform each other. Much like siblings united after many years. At the same time, it provides a rare opportunity for western practitioners not acculturated to the Asian traditions to objectively observe and integrate the core elements of the tradition into this new culture. As Venerable Thich Nhat Hahn States:

If those who teach Buddhism in the West keep in mind that all Dharmas are Buddhadharmas, then they will not feel like a drop of oil in a glass of water. If Westerners bring into their society an exotic expression of Buddhism, thinking that this particular form of Buddhism is the only true Buddhism, the oil will never dissolve into the water. Buddhism will only succeed here if it is built from your own experiences and with your own cultural ingredients. If you practice in exactly the same way we practice in Vietnam, Tibet, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Japan, or Korea, the oil drops will always remain separate from the water. As Western Buddhists, please use the many elements of your own culture to weave the fabric of Buddhadharmas.

In the West there are a number of teachers who are integrating our Western elements with the Eastern. The specific lineage of this center is Thien Lam Te, or the Sudden School of Awakening through Vietnam. The Abbot’s transmission is from Ven. Thich Tri Hoang. However, the goal of the center is to focus on the roots of Dhyana rather than the cultural trappings. The result is a main course of Dharma, spiced by Asian practices, presented in a culturally competent way to Westerners.

Much like the Zen Peacemaker Order, the Asian Classics Institute, and the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, the goal of the Middle-Way Meditation Center and the Middle-Way Peace Order is to establish specifically Western Dharma.

This approach is not always favored by our Asian colleagues, and not by our own lineages. Western teachers of the above programs are sometimes criticized by our Asian counterparts, and even dispossessed by the lineages for their lack of maintenance of the Asian way of doing things.

The response of those of us who follow the attitude noted by Venerable Thich Nhat Hahn is, "Come and see." If this flavor is suitable for you, then stay and nourish yourself. If it is not suitable, then please find a space that will nourish you. There is no wrong Dharma, just the wrong dharma for you. Why are there 84,000 doors to Dharma? Because the needs of sentient beings are numberless.

The Middle-Way Peace Order is one door to meet those needs. The program is three years in duration, meeting once a month with required papers and retreats. The first year is a study of Buddhist traditions, philosophy, art, architecture, and history. The second year is a study of the Suttas and Sutras. The third is a focus on practice and an internship. Graduation from the program is dependent on completion of curriculum requirements and endorsement from the elders.

Those who complete the program can pursue ordination as a Buddhist Priest, which is individual in the time it takes to come to ordination.