

Minutes of Angulimala Prison Group Meeting June 17, 2009

Present: Koan Janka, Sensei Nagy Buckley, Faith Mind Thoresen, Z Zeller, Gary Belton, Luminous Heart Thompson, Steward

The meeting opened with a period of silence and a check-in.

Koan raised the issue of an ex-inmate, who has been “on hold” in relation to possible attendance at ZCLA, pending the MHAЕ decisions and possible procedures about working with ex-inmates. Luminous Heart and Faith Mind will bring this concern to the MHAЕ meeting on Saturday, June 20th.

We explored concerns and issues in relation of our work in the jails, possible forms of education that might be needed for the APP group. We agreed that it would be useful to create a resource list of books and other sources of material; Faith Mind volunteered to coordinate this list. We then approached the topic of “what are we doing in the jails”, i.e. what is our mandate, our agreed upon work. In this context we explored appropriate and non appropriate topics of discussion. With inmates: we agreed that sexual and drug topics were in this latter category. We discussed knowing when we “did not know” an answer to an inmate’s question, having the humility to not get caught in roles of “the knower”. We also explored the distinctions between the roles of being a volunteer and a chaplain. It was suggested that we might begin study together by working with two texts from Quaker Prison Groups and from the Prison Dharma Network.

We then explored the APP connection with ZCLA, the advantages and disadvantages of being part of or separate from ZCLA. Some of the “pros” for being within the ZCLA mandala that were mentioned included: that we would have a religious sponsor and therefore have legitimacy in the eyes of the jail administration, the nonprofit status of ZCLA and how that enables us to receive donations, that we represent an established organization, that membership provides a level of accountability and transparency. Some of the disadvantages discussed were: less freedom of action and the fact that our going to the jails creates potential problems for the Center, the difficulties and challenges of working within the mandala. We made a “non binding decision” that we would, on balance, like to stay with the Center and to enter into learning about and practicing the mandala in our Circle. Whether or not the group stays connected to ZCLA, we decided that as a group of chaplains, it would be helpful to continue to meet in some form, for support and possible education.

It was announced that Sensei Daishin invites all ex-inmates to practice at his Wednesday group in Santa Monica.

Faith Mind and Luminous Heart both raised the possibility of their stepping away from the project. Neither was fully clear as to their eventual decisions.

Z will organize the setting of the date for the next meeting.

Agenda items to be carried over:

Continue work on our mission statement

Consider first steps toward peer and outside education for our group

Review the recourse list.