

TO: SHARED STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE
FROM: MARGARET JIFU GOWER
RE: MANY HANDS AND EYES CIRCLE: STATUS
DATE: JUNE 6, 2008

The members of the Many Hands and Eyes Circle appreciate the interest that Sangha members have shown and continue to show regarding the issues MHAЕ is addressing. We appreciate your support. We want to let you know what our status and activities are to date, and to invite your feedback and concerns. Additionally, the MHAЕ group wants to compile a list of resources within the Sangha—Sangha members' experience and expertise with any of these issues.

We have had two meetings, on May 17th and on May 31st. The first meeting was exploratory in nature, raising issues and concerns. In the second meeting the group identified the order of importance and priority of addressing particular broad areas of concern.

Status

The Prison Project. It was noted that the prison project was originally initiated outside the Center and later presented to the Center. Now is the time to determine whether the Center wishes to have a prison project and what the project would look like. Before this issue, and the issue of the project's relation to the Sangha, can be concretely addressed, the project volunteers need to hold council to surface their own issues and feelings. Then, these issues need to be communicated, and feedback and reflection among the prison project volunteers, MHAЕ and the Sangha must occur. MHAЕ members who are prison project volunteers are Faith-Mind Thoresen, Gojitsu Snodgrass, Luminous-Heart Thompson and Senshin Griffith.

Abuse survivors in the Sangha. Roshi observed that people coming into a religious group have certain expectations about boundaries, notwithstanding whether these expectations are expressed or disclosed. The question arose as to whether and how we can make the Sangha safe, what that would look like, how we can be safe in an unsafe world. Roshi wants to meet privately with abuse survivors, not so much as a formal circle or a healing circle, but as just to discuss their reality. Then, the discussion might be widened out. MHAЕ members Gessho Kumpf, Heart-Mirror Trotter, Luminous-Heart Thompson and Daishin Buksbazen will support this further effort.

The Prison Project in the Sangha. After the prison volunteers and the survivors go through their processes, interface between the project (in whatever form, if any, it might take) and the Sangha must be addressed. MHAЕ will consider what this would look like, so we can think things through carefully. The interface might take the form of a proposal by MHAЕ to the Sangha, but that is yet to be determined. MHAЕ members Dharma-Lotus Armstrong, Luminous-Heart Thompson, Daishin Buksbazen, Heart-Mirror Trotter, Gessho Kumpf and Lynda Golan will shepherd this aspect when the time comes.

Prison project and Center communications with ex-prisoners. For general inquiries, we will make a statement to ex-prisoners to the effect that at present, our project, policies and procedures are in transition and that we are therefore not in a position to engage with them or offer programs to them at the Center. (We will develop a carefully considered formal statement.) For ex-prisoners who have had an on-going relationship with the prison project volunteers, we will handle each request or inquiry on a case-by-case basis. Koan and Nagy, Jifu and Daishin will address these matters, in consultation with the Teachers Circle.

We all realize that this inquiry is a huge effort, and that the issues cannot and must not be resolved in a hurried manner. There will be a great deal of information gathering and reflection as we make this transition, and we appreciate the patience, support and input of the Sangha as we go through the process.

Action items

- Roshi to meet privately with Sangha survivors of sexual abuse—June or July.
- Prison Project will hold Council—June or July.
- Deal with current, on-going requests from ex-prisoners; develop statement re transition—Current and ongoing.
- Sangha council—August or September, depending on calendar.