

## Board of Governor's 2020 Mountains & Rivers Order Group Summaries

### Group 1—Diamond Net, Whole Person Caretaking

#### Major Points

- Housing the aging sangha on monastery grounds or very nearby. Various ideas about mix of ages, affordability, sustainability, and volunteerism opportunities.
- Training for support for the aging and dying—eldercare and death doula training.
- Accommodation of training requirements for people who are not as body able, so there is a path to becoming a full student.
- Yearbook for legacy so we can be able to look back and get to know each other better. And working on getting to know our ancestry.
- Expansion of online programs and support beyond COVID
- Resources such as tech assistance for the elderly, and a place for people who could register to help others in this way.

#### Thematic Notes

Shoju—Since last governor's meeting Diamond Net established its priorities: Offering dharma support for those having trouble getting to a center. Offering rides, sit with people at home who have an ailment who cannot get to the monastery. Dovetailing with Jizo project, advocating for those who cannot navigate the building. Students whose bodies are changing so they cannot navigate the building as they once could. Shoju has been the coordinator and is maintaining the Diamond Net website. Would like it if someone else would step forward to lead and motivate the group.

Communications Channels: Google group created by Seigei at beginning of COVID. Basecamp is an app that can be difficult for some to navigate. There is also a Slack channel. This can be useful because threads can be sorted into topics. Takusei suggests we have a list with the URLs for these communication channels. Shoju will do that. Christina suggested posting it on the Diamond Net website.

Eisho—Works as hospice nurse; does extensive telehealth, each patient is given a tablet. All kinds of therapy including music therapy—can do a physical—volunteers can help people. Safe because doesn't require ppe.

Most hospices have training for death doula. Hudson Valley Hospice is expanding, has physicians, building a hospice building with 14 beds for people who have no family or are homeless.

Shoju—Did death doula training last fall. The trainer, Henry, is a Buddhist himself. He could do this training at the monastery in person or virtually. Did not get assigned to anyone until after the pandemic hit and could not meet the person face to face, had to only talk over the phone—which is hard to make a connection.

Takusei—Last year tried to set up an online student directory.

Shoju—Has come up many times over the years. Would need to be spearheaded by lay students. Takusei

still willing to work on it. Monastery did not want it on their site. Needs to be private to protect people's information. Takusei worked on it with Dojaku and Hokyu. Should be limited to those who are formal students or are in the process of becoming them.

## **Group 2—Zen Training in Times of Covid**

### **Summary**

- Online programs have enabled connection; consistency; and practicing from a distance. Many would like to see virtual training a part of all we do.
- If we think creatively about on-line potential, what else can be offered?
- Lay students can assist the MRO remotely with some of these projects. \*\*

### STUDENT TRACK

The monastery is doing its first Tangaryo online 10/31;

On-line guardian counsel has been going well; also interviews for residency, and face-to-face teaching for students and intro weekend participants.

How might OCT count toward student track requirements?

Perhaps use OCT as an overflow option for sesshin post-covid?

Look at home practice as hermitage practice.

How might jukai be conducted remotely not knowing how long covid precautions will continue?

Seiren had experience of a virtual jukai at Breadloaf Mountain.

Seniors worked on zoom with students. Everyone did rakus on their own, mailed to the teacher, and Teacher talked them through the steps for the ceremony.

### SANGHA CONTACT

Sangha to sangha contact. How can people stay in touch with each other?

Have a site where people communicate with others to propose a group; organize them without an extra burden on monastics. \*\*

Sangha groups like the Poetry group have continued, led by lay students.

A site where people's face/name could be posted. \*\*

Several People liked this – being able to contact others.

Voluntary. Run by lay students? At a non-mro site?

Cybermonk (anonymous communication with a teacher/senior was nice)

Seniors now use email and zoom for one-on-one on the *Staying Connected* webpage.

### TECHNICAL HELP

Many sangha members need support with the technology.

Different options are available, such as logmein where you can get remote help on your computer. You have to trust that person.

Zoom training needed; a how-to page for Slack\*\*

### OTHER ONLINE IDEAS

Affiliates would love to have more seniors or monks to zoom with the group; women's group and/or Wild Grasses.

For those with zoom fatigue, for new people not ready for a retreat, create videos on Zen training, ie. *What is Zen?*

Create a course or youtube video, like TriCycle offers.

The lower carbon imprint is a factor in continuing online training.

#### HELPING THE MONASTERY\*\*

What can we do for the monastery for the staff remotely?

\*\* technical assistance for other students

\*\* develop a sangha-to-sangha contact site

\*\* Compile a list of other online courses/groups that students have experienced and recommend outside zmm.

### **Group 3—Sustainable MRO**

#### Summary

The Monastery can model sustainability for everyone else, helping drive systemic change.

Group is inspired to affect positive change for the planet and to heal our earth.

#### **Energy/Sustainability (Kokuan/Rebecca/Annie):**

- Carpeting. Jizo house? Sangha house Interface carpet company. All recycled content. Carpet industry is one of the dirtiest. The more demand for these sustainable products go up, investment will shift to supplying that demand. We can contribute that economy in that direction.
- Charging stations for electric vehicles. 40% emissions. Progressive electric vehicle law. 5000 rebate. Target to the environment - electrify buses. NY, Camden - highest rates of carbon and asthma. Lower carbon emissions. Recommend that with Jizo house, install 2 or 3 level charging stations. Plug in for a morning program and return home. By garden, 10 volt. Just plug it in for a weekend sesshin, just plug in and charge the battery enough to go home. Encouraging ppl, range anxiety - batteries will die. Monastery can help develop EV charging infrastructure from combustion engines to EV. Even having access to 110 volts in the parking lot would be great. Level 3.
- Building coalitions with other organizations. Advocating for policy. Economic vs. environment. Offer different business voices. Monastery can be part of these things to change policy. Transportation climate initiatives - 11 states - high level of leverage to change the energy system to what is more renewable.
- Intentional community as a possible solution to the climate crisis. We are reducing our carbon footprint by living together. Sharing meals, not driving, living in community alleviates some of the footprint for individuals. Living in a way to clean things up globally.
- Install more solar panels so we can be energy independent as well as support our larger community. Install for cabins and A frames.

- Improve insulation where needed.
- Omega has a whole system for purifying the sewage and waste from bathrooms using cattails and a waste purifying system.
- Permaculture. Bringing in experts on the topic to lead retreats. People coming and doing work on the grounds while also learning techniques. Upgrade composting toilets. Renovate the bath house. Install composting toilets in cabins and A frames.

### **Recycling Revolution (Jusan):**

- Develop the Monastery's own recycling system fully (single-stream recycling recyclable items are not being sorted properly, and "for profit" waste management companies act irresponsibly)
  1. Developing a waste management area/room for sorting recyclables - paper, cans, glass, metal, cardboard, plastic and garbage.
  2. Shift our current waste management company to a responsible partner. **Shandaken Recycling Center** collects recyclable items sorted, free of charge. The Monastery could bring our sorted items to this center regularly.
  3. Further managing our waste responsibly by joining the recycling company "TerraCycle" that provides, for a fee, Zero Waste Boxes for sorting those items that are not included in the usual recycling company or center like Shandaken Recycling Center. Additionally, we could drop off our collected items like dental products, tooth brushes, empty tooth tubes and razors to our nearest collect spots (for example, the store in Woodstock "Bring Your Own Bottle" participates in a program sponsored by Colgate and TerraCycle."
  4. What we currently pay goes toward supporting responsible recycling partners. Most of all, "the future starts today". Change starts from us.

### **Food Sustainability/Farm & Kitchen (Peter/Sansho/David/Yukon/Paul):**

- Food preservation. If garden is expanded, then food preservation could follow - beans, squashes, root vegetables, learning how to preserve well and reliably. Make it a real institution in the kitchen. Set up and gear. Want to see big vats in the basement.
- Ron Finley, urban gardener, says growing your own food is like printing your own money. Growing is a revolutionary act. When not dependent on others, it's very empowering and freeing. A 10 by 10 plot can grow 7 pounds of beans.
- Start small, growing some things that are preservable and storable. Maybe start with Cherokee black beans. Build a trellis and grow some beans and see how much we can get. Inside dye garden or in the orchard.
- Grow one whole row 500 feet long - just flowers. Attracts bees, butterflies, and moths as pollinators that support a wider variety of birds and other beings.
- Tried to get chickens, but that's a big job. We have so much land; great to remove ticks; adding another layer of sustainability to our culture. Not just that, though, something about having animal life on property, you end up having a relationship with these beings.
- Green Gulch - they have a dedicated period of time on schedule just gardening. Add a number of people doing garden shifts. Produce food that is sustainable and healthy. Including plants and animals. We can do better here with what we have without shifting our focus. It wouldn't take away from practice.

- Training what cooks can do and role of what is available to make a nourishing meal sustainably.
- What's possible to do with a community of people tied to the land providing food for our monastery: another mode of being? A schedule that is accommodating practice and more agriculture. Another piece of land.

## **BOG Group 4—Temple Big Sky Discussion Group**

### Highlights/Summary of Conversation Notes

#### **The Building**

- Go beyond “break-fix”
- Use the COVID down-time to make repairs
- Shore up infrastructure- (i.e. Zendo ceiling, Buddha Hall ceiling, Zendo ventilation)
- Get a plan/budget together, plan fundraising, pursue existing funding opportunities
- Improve Accessibility (i.e. elevator, etc.), Improve ventilation, upgrade cushions
- Rethink/repurpose use of indoor space & make better use of outdoor space
- Anything we do to use more of the space in COVID can thereafter be useful going forward
- Sitting in Buddha Hall: Better ventilation than zendo, residents can remain separated/isolated
- Attention to YWCA building/Temple building issues: for instance, stairs are problematic
- Thinking big: Acquire another building in the area for residential use.
- Sign up for Community Solar, document the journey and educate others

#### **Rethink concepts of Staff and Residency**

- More consistent staff presence
- Monastic as admin there, who is present most of the time,
- Have a monthly or quarterly rota rather than weekly.
- Improve the coordination of lay volunteers
- Define the types of residency: on-site or off-site, full time or part time, Artist-in-residence, visiting teacher-in-residence, lodger, and other types?
- Dedicated full-time staff (possibly paid), for instance for building maintenance, volunteer coordination.
- Question: If current residency is not serving dharma during COVID, would removing residents give us greater flexibility to serve the Temple's mission?

#### **Formal recognition of the Temple's place in MRO training**

- Serving the Temple is part of monastic training & lay training
- Define more clearly what ways the Temple is essential in the order
- Define the functions of the Temple (i.e. diversity draw, community hub, community outreach/support, training center)

#### **Local Community**

- The Temple being the HUB of city/community MRO activities

- More work with neighbors, community associations, block association
- More program offerings for community, for instance weekday meditation instruction.
- Address safety concerns in area
- Re COVID: Have a phased reopening plan ready
- Feeding food insecure residents near Temple (using monastery garden surplus, other sources.)

## **BOG Group 5—Liturgy Discussion Group Summary**

### **Readings**

An updated recommended reading list

A group of readers to shared viewpoints on the books recommended

### **Library**

Space, a new library in a building of its own, with an archive

Time/space to read – All year-round, not just during non-Ango

Dedicated time and quiet space with good light and desks

### **Liturgy**

Reconsideration of existing translations

New translations

Adding Japanese liturgy forms (Hokkyo Zammai, Butcho Sonsho Dharani, etc)

Daily verses – gathas for daily activities (both original and translated)

### **Resident scholars/teachers/poets/artists, etc.**

### **Sending monastics to Japan for an Ango**

### **Programs**

Group on-line program on precepts in everyday life

### **Bios of ancestors**

Names of male ancestors in original language

Create a chapel of the ancestors and mountain spirits

### **Other viewpoints represented**

Other Buddhist traditions

Other spiritual traditions

Multi-year Shobogenzo project

Dogen in the original

Translators' forum online

### **More Buddhist arts**

Finding new ways of artistic expression in Buddhism

### **Teachings translated into other languages**

Spanish, French, German etc.

## **BOG Group 6—Maha-Sangha: Social Action and Community Summary**

### **1) Overview**

Recommending a major shift for the MRO to put practice into action, given the urgent multiple crises we face today, and to connect with people and organizations outside the sangha. As one participant put it, “ZMM is doing well financially and our giving hand could stretch out more easily to those in need around us.” The group advocates that we immediately become involved in social action around three main areas:

Giving direct aid and assistance to people and organizations in our local upstate and NYC communities.

Focusing on social action related to race, class, poverty, immigrants’ rights, and threats to our democracy.

Focusing on social action related to the environmental crisis.

### **2) Action Steps**

#### **What Skillful Things Can We Do Now? (Immediate actions)**

--The MRO can offer food assistance, financial assistance, volunteer assistance, and other kinds of aid to local families and groups. At the soup kitchen in Phoenicia we can donate food and sangha members can volunteer as cooks. We can establish a bi-weekly ZMM soup kitchen for the public, and offer garden shares for local needy families and/or expand the garden to grow food to donate locally.

--We can connect with people and organizations that are already taking action in our communities and have expertise that can guide us in our efforts. One example is Samadhi, the addiction recovery center in Kingston founded by Shokan, which is in need of volunteers. Samadhi also has two 24-hour mental health and addiction hotlines that need help. ([david@samadhiny.org](mailto:david@samadhiny.org), (917)783-9352, [www.samadhiny.org](http://www.samadhiny.org))

--Another example is New Sanctuary Coalition in NYC, which advocates for immigrants in danger of deportation and ICE raids.

--We can collect donations for people in the sangha who’ve lost their jobs, are having housing trouble, or who don’t have money for children’s college expenses, etc.

#### **What is the “Next Now” Down the Road? (Medium-term actions)**

--Develop an MRO social action strategy. Who can we invite in to help us? What pivots do we need to make as an organization?

--Connect with local interfaith and tribal organizations to create larger helping efforts.

--Identify additional groups where sangha members can volunteer. One specific example would be to establish contacts with organizations working with New York City youth. Other examples:

- Buddhist Action Coalition, [buddhistaction.org](http://buddhistaction.org).
- Ulster County United Way, which has a mentoring program for underserved women.
- Kingston Mutual Aid, a coalition of dozens of organizations with deep roots in the

community that came together in response to the pandemic

<https://www.kingstonmutualaid.org/>

- For info on local work around the Undoing Racism workshops, you can email [urwKingston@gmail.com](mailto:urwKingston@gmail.com).
- O+ has a helpline to assist people with the stresses of the pandemic <https://opositivefestival.org/copingduringcovidhelpline/>
- Givewell.org focuses donations on the most effective charities.
- Community Spring focuses on helping communities recover from the effects of the pandemic <https://www.csgnv.org/covid19>
- There is a Slack tech center set up with organizing information around different topics.

--Volunteer to drive immigrants to their crucial appointments, such as court appointments, doctors' appointments, etc.

### **3) What Should We Do in the Long-Term?**

--Expand the current prison program and peer mentorship.

--A requirement for being in residency should be volunteering with underserved people (such as those with substance use disorders in Kingston).

--Create an Immigrant's Rights Action Group in the MRO that pays for legal retainer fees, drives people to court appearances and doctors' appointments, and builds trust in the ZMM and temple communities

--Hold a conference of organizers at ZMM to break us out of our white and privileged bubble.

--Develop a PR strategy to highlight the actions we're taking.

## **BOG Group 7—Arts Practice/Program Innovations Summary**

### **Beginning Discussion**

We shared views on what is most important to us about arts practice, and those facets we would suggest prioritizing in future programming. They can be summarized into the following topics:

- Experience Freedom & Flow During Arts Practice
- Move Away from "Art as Result" to "Art as Offering"
- Direct Relationship of Specific Arts Practice Experiences to Zazen
- Right Speech/Social Engagement in Arts Practice
- History of ZMM as a Zen Arts Center
- Going Beyond Forms Typically Characterized as "Zen Arts"
- Creating Situations that build Connection & Intimacy in the Sangha and Larger Community thru Arts Practice

### **Brainstorming Program Suggestions**

Many of the ideas offered focused on an interdisciplinary approach. We touched on ways they could be offered virtually and then transitioned to IRL as circumstances change. In most cases we weren't specific about whether the programs were envisioned for ZMM or Fire Lotus.

- Integrative Arts Retreat working simultaneously with music, dance and visual art; possibly culminating in a group performance using all the elements. (Think Allan Kaprow and the concept of a "happening" but with less chaos)
- Culinary Arts Retreat culminating in a community offering of the food created (ex. providing a meal for a local organization, donating the offering to the food bank, etc.)
- Bread Baking Retreat, perhaps getting Ed Brown back as a guest
- The Creative Practice of Zoom Retreat, specifically addressing Zoom as an art medium in itself; learning how to collaborate with all its potential
- Photography In Your Own Backyard Retreat
- Photography retreat based on Daido's work, Minor White's teaching, history of, etc. (this isn't maybe that different from Don Symanski's)
- Music and Sound as Arts Practice, going beyond the study of a single instrument or voice
- What Is Sacred Music? exploring zendo instruments and/or what sacred music in many traditions have in common
- Jazz and Zen
- Ensemble Improvisation (dance & music together) - improvisation as a form of compassion
- Social Art/Public Art Retreat, going beyond ZMM or Fire Lotus grounds into public space, activism through Arts Practice
- "Plein Air" Painting Retreat
- Domestic Arts Retreat, sewing, mending, simple cooking, washing, etc. as Arts
- Bring back the Artist Residency program
- Organize arts field trips for sangha to go see practice-related performances or exhibitions together off-site
- More movement arts retreats, crossing arts practice with body practice
- An evening or online speaker series combining Zen with various other topics (Zen & Architecture, Zen & Sound, Wabi-Sabi Aesthetics, Zen & Gardening, Zen & Tattoo Art, etc.)
- Creative Process Retreat, creative practice being the hub and then having choices of which "spokes" to explore including vis art, dance, music, prose, poetry, etc. -- this would probably take longer than a short weekend retreat

### **Non-retreat Programming Ideas**

- Add a virtual gallery to the MRO website for sangha artwork in all media to be shared
- A physical Artists Archive of works that ZMM wants to preserve by guest teachers, MRO students who are working artists, etc.
- Display public sculpture on the grounds at ZMM, rotating placement of large scale sculptures related to practice or by practitioners (maybe change it once a year?)
- Utilize more space in the sangha house for changing exhibits of sangha artwork

- Look inside the sangha to working artists, teachers and professionals in arts administration to realize some of the work of increased arts programming. It was acknowledged that the teachers and monastics already have much to do, and it will be necessary for those with experience in this area to step forward.

## **BOG Group 8—Family, Kids, and Youth Programs Summary**

### **Childcare (for lack of a better word):**

Importance of supporting parents of young children to be able to attend the Sunday service on a more regular basis – what would it look like to provide some form of childcare every week?

- More loosely structured programming – continuing to incorporate zazen, kinhin, snack preceded by meal gatha, and caretaking but working in more nature walks, free drawing and art explorations which would not take a lot of advance prep
- Dedicated space, possibly a room in the Jizo House, a “prepared environment” that would feel exciting and engaging and allow children to play safely and creatively with gentle supervision – Jizo House as intergenerational space – realizing Daido’s dream!
- Some ideas for what the kid’s room would house: books, dress up clothes, art supplies, space to display kid’s artwork, blocks, puzzles, and other engaging physical materials
- Rotating network of volunteers, somewhat similar to Diamond Net, so that the resident Zen Kids staff is not always out of the zendo – we would provide some basic training to all volunteers, and ask that they dedicate one Sunday each month or two
- Importance of childcare in terms of accessibility to parents, particularly single parents and those for whom a babysitter is not a financial possibility – as BFOD group and Diamond Net mentioned
- Childcare at the Temple...none of us have enough experience there to think through exactly how that could manifest, but it seems important
- Option that people coming to other events during the week can request childcare and we can reach out to the network of volunteers to see if someone is available
- More opportunities for kids to be in the zendo/interact with/serve the rest of the sangha – normalizing the (occasionally unruly) presence of children in our silence-loving community 😊

### **Online component and COVID-time accommodations:**

- Possibility of continuing the Zoom component of the youth programs when/if the monastery reopens, since families who live too far away to ever come in person have become part of the community – this is potentially something Eve could do once she is in grad school and less involved in the in-person program
- Problem of “Zoom fatigue”, especially for younger children and those who go to school online – are there offline ways we could keep the families connected?
  - Outdoor nature walk for local families, health precautions permitting
  - Monthly youth programs creativity bulletin – email or newsletter with drawings, writing, and other expressions from all ages of the youth program
  - Youth programs “Secret Santa” holiday gift exchange and/or chain letter

- **Online resources for families on the website (we love this idea!)**
  - Short videos of beginning instruction and guided meditations for children
  - Art prompts
  - Kid-friendly liturgy like the Zen Kids meal gatha
  - Recommended reading – books, movies, and poems with dharma themes
  - A way to offer resources to parents remotely as well as raise the visibility of the youth programs

## Teens

- Programs specifically for college students to keep the teens connected once they're at school
- Importance of real work and responsibility for teens
  - Garden space or other physical part of the monastery they can take responsibility for?
  - Can the teens take on some responsibility for the younger children – i.e. an all ages nature walk where the teens facilitate some art activity
- Continuing/expanding moving up and coming of ages ceremonies like Azalea's
- Opportunities for group volunteer and service work inside and outside of the sangha – the teen group at the Woodstock Jewish Congregation does a lot of work with Family of Woodstock food pantry, maybe there is a connection there

## Retreats and overnights:

- Longer nature and camping retreat – teens could help prepare site and look after younger children
- Time during retreats where the children are off doing something and there is programming specifically for the parents around creativity, connecting to nature, and play
- Week-long day camp for younger kids if overnight is not an option
- Scholarships and outreach to encourage diversity in overnight programs

## Dreaming big:

- Whole building for Zen Kids! Treehouse/cabin/"scout hut"/clubhouse
- Youth programs as a full or part time residential work position
- Exploring summer or semester work, nature, and play programs for various ages
- Incorporating various forms of diversity, including neurodiversity (children on the high-functioning end of the autism spectrum).

## Group 9—Outdoor Practice & Wild Dharma Summary

*"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace." - Aldo Leopold*

- Nature can be found in cities
  - Trees in New York, at Temple, educate on the NYC trees and what problems they have/ how

they are struggling

- Hermitage
  - Hermitage prep (training, learning how to start a fire, cook outside, etc.)
  - Camping/survival retreat that preps for a hermitage (possibly start as retreat and then all go off on their own to hermitage)
  - Create raised platforms or space to have camping hermitages; a yurt for hermitage.
- Nature Retreats
  - Wilderness skills retreat (has been done in the past and is/was great!), built up lots of skills to be alone up the mountain. Great for building confidence in being alone
  - Camping up the mountain during off seasons (not busy, fewer bugs)
  - Sangha meetups in state campgrounds ( can be manageable to people who are new to camping or a bit nervous about it).
- Engagement in Nature at the Monastery
  - Quality of meditation in nature
  - Developing more trails up our mountain (Mt. Tremper) all the way to the top
  - Nature path(s) all around monastery (plaque with plant identification, indigenous peoples' engagement and uses, ethnobotanical education, SOIL)
  - Outdoor sesshin (up the mountain, down Zesi), not just the warm months but also fall and spring
  - Nature sesshin just for women, and just for men, and also for other sangha affinity groups.
  - Regularly scheduled (once a month maybe) hike up the mountain, organized special hike as the seasons go by.
  - To be able to visit the monastery and camp (either in our forests or Zesi) instead of staying in the building and grounds here
  - Dog hike, everyone can bring their dogs as we go up the mountain
  - Getting kids and families involved in nature. Getting over fear of wilderness, exposing those who live in more urban areas comfortable with the woods at night/alone. Time and space and skills around that.
  - Low barrier nature experiences for inexperienced people.
- Pilgrimage
  - Biking to the monastery
    - On website have ways of getting to the monastery by biking (self-powered)
    - Also on website providing resources to pilgrimage to monastery
    - Pilgrimage around monastery area with monastery as a stop  moving hermitage
  - Woman's / larger retreat in the Himalayas
    - Hiking in a sacred place
    - Tibet/Japan ...? Mount Tremper too
  - Walking from NYC to the monastery
- Sangha member donating their property in the Adirondacks (56 acres)
  - Large history of philosophical/ spiritual groups and retreat centers in area
  - Vegetable garden
  - Winter proof house fit for 7 people
  - Space and land for larger development
- Hold services (more than just the funeral service) at the cemetery

- Survival element:
  - Foraging (mushrooms and other things), it's amazing to be able to identify nature, plants, animals, reading wind and water, and understand your environment and being able to tell the weather and what is happening by looking around you
  - Could be a retreat to teach how to read nature
    - Accessibility might be a problem here, people might not sign up for a week of camping in the woods, but maybe a workshop would be good to get their feet wet
    - Bush craft
- Art practice
  - Encouragement to use natural elements in our art practice. Primary object being to capture nature and using the natural elements to integrate it all in a deeper way
    - Stones, spore prints, photos with the sun.
    - I love how the dye studio has committed to using natural plants and dyes from the mountain, and I would love if we as students would take that up too
    - Having the eco system around and as the mountain monastery being a part of our practice
- Fire building and recognizing purpose
  - Gather people together
  - Cook
  - Get rid of mosquitos
  - Full moon fires, sacred fires, there is something so wonderful about sitting around a fire. Fire speaks.
  - Make a sacred area, a fire pit. So you can listen to fire.
- A continuum of opportunities, it has been mentioned that not everyone is going to go camping or on a pilgrimage, but ways to connect at the monastery.
  - Plans to integrate nature with our practice [?] from exploring nature is a guided way to a larger pilgrimage, but a larger plan to integrate the natural relationship so it is clearly organized as part of the practice and something for everyone
  - outdoor zazen on monastery grounds
  - more consistent schedule of outdoor services
- Ecodharma
  - If we don't do more active stuff on climate, in 100 or 200 or 50 years there is not going be much left. This Climate Crisis is a Spiritual Crisis.
  - Citizen Science project; volunteers to explore when shrubs are starting to leaf out, to begin to get an awareness of the changes. So that we as a sangha can participate where ever we are, to create an awareness and connection to nature and climate change
- Expand outdoor amphitheater
- Outdoor pavilion -- Have a space designated as an outdoor zendo
- Nature Retreat center like a 9<sup>th</sup> gate of practice, where people can go and stay, poetry in nature. Incorporate a therapeutic side of nature
- A dharma practice of giving back to the land, knowing more about the land, understanding the history of the land, all the way back to the indigenous people
- Ethnobotany, foraging
- Including natural world in daily liturgy  
Ashokan watershed, wildlife, climate change [?] the intersection of theses

- Climbing trees
- If you want to have people save the earth, you have to help people love the earth
- Forest bathing we come from a Japanese lineage and that would be something interesting to explore
- What can the sangha create and contribute sans organized leadership to share the responsibility for making these things happen? Retreats can be led by non-teachers / non-monastics.

## Group 10—Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice (DEIJ)

### Highlights

- Understanding what it is about the Temple or sangha that isn't welcoming to POC
- Bring in more teachers of color for retreats
- Greater awareness of class issues in accessibility/residency
- Ambassadors for BIPOC who are new at the Temple
- Retreats/sits/events specifically for or welcoming to BIPOC
- Scholarships for BIPOC with a stipend - show value of labor, open opportunities
  - Apprenticeship program in Monastery handcrafts, land cultivation, to gain skills
- Childcare during all monastery/temple programs

### Discussion

- **What is preventing anyone from coming into the zendo? And what is preventing BIPOC and others from feeling comfortable?**
  - Do we want the zendo to be more welcoming or see more people of color in the zendo?
  - Why is breaking people into groups the mechanism for making people comfortable just because they're in the majority?
  - We're starting from the point that it is important for people to feel included. To the degree they're not, why is that? What is stopping people? What would the barriers be for people accessing the temple?
  - Seeing the world from a different perspective can heighten awareness - and particularly in Zen practice - to recognize that our ignorance is vast, and that we can learn from everyone.
  - In a diversity initiative, one person began to recognize that spaces one person saw as neutral were fraught for their colleagues of color.
  - If the whole point of this practice is non-duality, and then you start breaking people into identity groups, doesn't that create a problem?
  - On the absolute level - there is no separation. On the mundane level, there is no race... yet in the relative world, our culture very much divides people by race, and this is deeply embedded in our culture. Issues of humanity, being decent to people, or inclusion is not necessarily political, or politicized. It's more about human decency.
- **So! What is preventing people from coming into the Temple?**
  - Many people might feel a particular way when looking at the Temple or the website - that it's so specific to Japanese culture.

- BIPOC might feel something about what could seem like submission to specifics of another culture that might be too much.
- Personal experience of one BIPOC on his first visit to Fire Lotus Temple; maybe it can offer some insight into larger POC experience:
  - When he first entered the space, he recognized that most folks didn't look like him - racial background, age - and immediately thought, "Who in this space can I relate to?" As an African American male without much background about what Zen was, seeing robes and bowing and things, the resonance is "cult".
  - Reminds him of experience working with a leadership development program which brings high-scoring low-income kids of color together for training for boarding schools across the country. Kids going from predominantly African American and Latino to predominantly white spaces find lots of friction - ways to communicate and relate to folks - there was always a feeling of an elephant in the room.
  - Going to the Temple where most people don't look like him brings up those same feelings. "Can I be fully accepted as a member of this space? How does this identity I carry outside this temple, the one inextricably tied to the way I look, impact my experience here?"
- Thoughts on how the Temple could be more welcoming (from his personal experience):
  - Some things were striking or confusing - although everyone was super welcoming - the Temple entranceway was very stark; had no context.
  - Drawn by the idea of POC sits, and to have someone serving as a beacon to facilitate introducing people to the space, taking into consideration some of the obstacles that folks may have - wanting to see folks who look like them, hearing about what Zen practice is, exploring ideas about spirituality that aren't connected to someone's prior cultural exposure to spirituality.
  - Having dedicated BIPOC practice groups/retreats gives people the opportunity to be with one another. Those practice groups and retreats—for all kinds of people—generate a richness that can be brought back the wider sangha.
  - Imagery on the website could be more balanced; a lot of the faces are white, how to do this without tokenism.
- **What do we dream MRO looking like, and offering, and being able to contribute in the wider world? In five years?**
  - Work with the BIPOC sangha to develop programs and initiatives. A scholarship program? A month of residency with a cohort of people coming in who shared a similar interest or identity? Young people, or BIPOC, LGBTQ folks? You'd know you'd be showing up with people who shared your identity to do dharma exploration or study. How would you structure it so it doesn't feel weird?
  - For a number of individuals in NYC, having the financial support to try something new would make the idea of a retreat and the newness of that, could encourage people. That could strengthen the community and build numbers. One BIPOC member would love to

contribute to that: he's involved in organizing groups and works with communities that might benefit from exposure to this practice. It helps individuals strengthen their resolve and commitment to activities that are challenging or traumatizing.

- More gatherings like MLK Day to honor other leaders and occasions and to bring people in. Combine the practice with the topic. People in the neighborhood might notice that the event is more about them than typically in the largely white space; an entry point.
- Would love to have retreats that explicitly make the connection between Buddhism and this work - exploring explicitly the answers to Tom's questions - why are we doing this work? Like, "Buddhism and Race".
- Sangha is so important, but a lot of the work is individual, person to person. In other sanghas someone visited, like Chan or Thai sanghas, the welcome is *overwhelming*, there's someone at the entrance, really charming and endearing, making you felt seen and wanted. Maybe if there were a monastic standing outside the temple?
- Childcare is a big thing! We just don't have that. That's a real barrier to people coming, childcare usually comes to the women. And people who can't afford babysitters, that's a real barrier.
- Teachers: more teachers of color invited to the sangha, so we can hear the teachings from that perspective. And be careful who's invited to speak.
- A scholarship program with a stipend; would show the value the sangha puts on their labor. What if the money for that stipend came from the handmade at the monastery items? And an apprenticeship program teaching people skills around stewardship of the earth, dyeing, craft making, statuary, farming, end of life care.
- Allowing residents to devote part of their time to income-generating tasks could help people do longer retreats from a financial perspective if they are able to work remotely and maintain their jobs.

## Group 11—LGBTQ+ Group

### Recommendations:

#### 1. Establish a TGNC (Transgender/Gender NonConforming) sitting group

-Josephine, Sarah, and Oliver (launching 11/20)

#### 2. LGBT competency training for monastics

-Would need to be done at least once every FIVE years --> terms change, culture changes, and the MRO needs to stay on top of it.

-Oliver can do research into good organizations to that offer this

#### 3. Gender neutral changing room at the monastery

-Structural changes to most (if not all) of the dorms to give ALL folks more privacy, not just TGNC folks.  
Example: Reduce bunks, put in changing stalls

#### 4. TGNC/LGBT Retreats

- Workshops relating to gender identity and dharma
- Jeffrey Marsh --> TGNC motivational speaker/writer/zen buddhist in NYC
- La Sarmiento ---> TGNC buddhist teacher
- Larry Yang

#### 5. Pride Month (June) Acknowledgement

- Example: Pride flag on flagpole

#### 6. Harassment training for Monastery and Temple residents upon arrival

- Let people know the chain of command in case of an issue
- Let people know that the MRO takes issues seriously
- Would include respecting pronouns and gender identity

7. All monastics, ideally, should be introducing themselves with their pronouns, and asking others their pronouns upon introduction.

#### 8. LGBTQ mentors at Temple

- Already established at the Monastery, but not really a thing at the Temple

9. Gender neutral bathrooms in the first floor of Monastery cloister, as well as in the sangha house.

10. Gender neutral showers in the sangha house.

11. More regular LGBTQ meetings at Temple.

-Perhaps the leadership in charge of organizing these meetings needs to be revisited. There are many young LGBTQ people in our sangha who would appreciate more frequent meetings.

12. Similar to WiW and BIPOC groups --> Cisgender and TGNC groups.

### **Additional informally submitted suggestions for BOG**

#### **Expand the Monastery shop**

Expand the shop to include small appliance repair with a dedicated work bench set aside with tools that would be useful. like a multimeter, needle nose pliers, and jewelers screw driver set.

#### **Become a site for Tibet Aid**

ZMM might provide a home -- and possibly, in the future, staffing -- for the sponsorship and Tibetan support projects of Tibet Aid ([www.tibetaid.org](http://www.tibetaid.org)). Fusho and Jamie Unyu Donegan serve on the Board of Directors and are interested in locating Tibet Aid in a sustainable site, with the potential for additional practitioners to support this work. Would be happy to make a presentation about Tibet Aid and this possibility to MRO's Board of Directors or to appropriate staff at any point.

**Youth program for high schoolers**

Help Brooklyn Zen Center continue its youth program, ie teach meditation and offer mentoring for youth for college and careers, help to pick up what BZC had to end when they lost their space in the city.