

# COMMON GROUND MEDITATION CENTER

Supporting the Twin Cities Mindfulness Meditation Community  
Practicing Together in the Footsteps of the Buddha

**September – November, 2009**

## **Dear Common Ground Friends,**

The Buddha taught that the experience of stress and suffering arises lawfully, due to a conditioned unfolding, dependent on the mind not seeing clearly. We all experience difficulty, whether it is an intensely painful emotion or the slow burn of impatience. When the mind is under the influence of pain, habitual reactions are triggered. These reactive patterns often perpetuate the causes and conditions that lead to more suffering down the road. The Buddha uncovered a path where the experience of suffering does not lead to more confusion and suffering, but rather leads to the arising of skill, insight, and release.

We train the mind to see clearly and calmly the full range of experience, from pleasant to unpleasant, without being confused by reactive patterns. When we have difficult experiences, the mind reflects: “There is suffering here, this experience should be understood, not denied or destroyed.” A balanced mind can become skillful at seeing how the experience of suffering is constructed, and how this activity of constructing can be abandoned, leading to the heart’s release.

This is the path taught by the Buddha. All the practices are simply different ways of strengthening and balancing the mind so that it can understand suffering with wisdom and let go.  
Peace,

Mark Nunberg, Guiding Teacher

## **ONGOING PROGRAMS**

### **Weekly Practice Groups**

Common Ground offers drop-in practice groups three times a week: Wednesday and Sunday evenings and Sunday morning. These weekly groups are designed to be a cornerstone for one’s practice by providing ongoing instruction and teachings that help illuminate the simple but challenging practice of mindfulness. The Buddha taught that mindfulness is the way to go beyond habits of distraction and grasping. To walk this path of wisdom and compassion, we need the support of a community that shares this intention. Each session includes a guided meditation, dharma talk, and discussion. Both experienced and beginning meditators are welcome. Led by Mark Nunberg.

**Wednesdays, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Sundays, 10:30 – 11:35 a.m.**

**Sundays, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

### **Sunday Morning Children's Practice**

**10:30 – 11:35 a.m.**

Please join us for this new weekly drop-in opportunity for families, led by community volunteers. The children's practice is held in the community room during Sunday Morning Weekly Practice Group. Parents should plan on staying with their child until she or he has settled in. In addition, one parent should assist the teacher every second visit. When not assisting, parents are expected to join other community members in the meditation hall. This children's practice is designed for 1 to 7 year olds. Please contact Kate Needleman at [okneedleman@gmail.com](mailto:okneedleman@gmail.com), for more information. A Sunday morning program for children 10 to 13 is being planned for this fall, led by Linda Breitag ([LBreitag@gmail.com](mailto:LBreitag@gmail.com)) and Kelly Foster ([kelf@usfamily.net](mailto:kelf@usfamily.net)). Please email one of them if you would like additional information on this tween opportunity.

### **Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation: The Way of Awareness**

Mindfulness meditation leads to insight into the nature of our hearts and minds, revealing an inherent clarity, openness, and ease. This course includes an introduction to the intention behind practice, an introduction to insight (vipassana) meditation techniques, instructions for working with common obstacles, an overview of the practices of lovingkindness, and a discussion of how mindfulness can be part of one's daily life. Please register by calling or stopping by.

**Intro Class with Mark Nunberg, Six Tuesdays, September 15 to October 27 (no class on October 13<sup>th</sup>), 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. or**

**Intro Workshop with Gail Iverson, Sunday December 6, 1:30 – 5:00 p.m.**

### **Open Meditation Sessions**

Open meditation is available on a drop-in basis for anyone wishing to practice silent sitting or walking meditation. Stay for as many 30-minute periods as you would like. Please arrive and depart with the bells, which are rung every half hour.

**Monday – Saturday Mornings 7:00 – 9:00 a.m.**

**Sunday Mornings 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Tuesday Evenings 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

### **Metta Practice Group**

This practice group is for people interested in developing the heart by training in the four beautiful emotions of lovingkindness (metta), compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. Each session includes instruction, a guided meditation, a short dharma talk, and time for questions and discussion. This monthly drop-in group meets on the first Friday of each month. Led by Mark Nunberg and Gail Iverson.

**Fridays, September 4, October 2, November 6, December 4; 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

### **Buddhist Studies Program: Cultivating Wholesome Relationships**

The Buddhist Studies Program is designed for people who have attended three or more mindfulness meditation retreats and have a commitment to daily meditation practice. This ongoing program is designed to deepen our practice through the study and application of the

teachings of the Buddha. In this eight-week course, we will explore the Buddha's teaching on wholesome relationships. Whether one has a partner or is relating to friends, work colleagues, or relatives, our lives are often dominated by the ups and downs of our relationships. In this course we will learn to distinguish between intimacy and attachment, and between clarity and judgment. Participants will be expected to use the teachings as a focus of their meditation and daily practice. Led by Mark Nunberg.

**Eight Mondays, September 14 – November 2, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Optional sitting period, 7:00 – 7:30 p.m.**

### **Practice Meetings**

People interested in meeting with Mark Nunberg to discuss their practice can call to set up an appointment. These practice meetings are usually scheduled for 30 minutes and are available to people with specific questions about their meditation practice or for people who are interested in deepening their practice through regular meetings with a spiritual friend.

## **WORKSHOPS**

Please contact the center to register.

### **Buddhist Psychology of Healing with Steve Armstrong**

**Saturday, September 12, 9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

Steve Armstrong has studied the dhamma and practiced insight meditation since 1975. He has served for many years at the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts as an Executive Director, Board member and senior teacher. As a monk in Burma under the guidance of Sayadaw U Pandita, he undertook intensive, silent practice of insight and lovingkindness meditations for five years; and in Australia, he studied the Buddhist psychology (abhidhamma) with Sayadaw U Zagara. He continues his practice under the guidance of Sayadaw U Tejaniya at the Shwe Oo Min Meditation Center in Rangoon. Steve is a co-founding teacher of the Vipassana Metta Foundation's dharma sanctuary and hermitage on Maui. He has been leading meditation retreats internationally since 1990 and encourages spiritual development through cultivating insightful awareness and liberating understanding of the core teachings of the Buddha in all life activities.

### **Forgiveness Workshop with Craig Vollmar**

**Saturday, October 10, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.**

The practice of forgiveness is a key to open our hearts to authentic happiness. So why do we resist it so intently? Perhaps we are stuck in the stories of our resentments and disappointments and how they stunted our growth. In working with our feelings toward others and toward ourselves, we will come to forgive ourselves for not being better than we are and we will begin to accept and appreciate ourselves for what we already are. The goal of this workshop is to help us use the wisdom of our experience and practice to work through these difficult emotions. In time, with practice, the negative emotions that lock our hearts will dissipate of their own accord and we will begin feeling contented and responding to life without hostility and ill will.

### **Buddhist History for Buddhist Practitioners with Rita Gross**

**Saturday, October 17, 1:30 – 4:00 p.m.**

In the first two installments of this workshop, we discussed pre-Buddhist India and the life of the Buddha up through the legends of the First Council, as well as monastic and lay life in

Buddhism's early centuries. In this next workshop we will focus on the schisms of early Buddhism and the factors leading to the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism. If time permits, we will also discuss the life and work of Emperor Asoka, including the spread of Buddhism to Sri Lanka and the first commitment of Buddhist scriptures to writing. Teacher Rita Gross is an internationally known feminist scholar-practitioner, a senior teacher in Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche's meditation center, Lotus Garden, and also a senior teacher of Shambhala Buddhism. She is professor emerita of comparative studies in religion at UW, Eau Claire. Her work on Buddhism and gender has been influential in academic and Buddhist communities. She is the author of *Buddhism After Patriarchy*, and *Soaring and Settling: Buddhist Perspectives on Contemporary Social and Religious Issues*. Her newest book, *A Garland of Feminine Reflections*, will be published soon.

**A Burning Desire: Dharma God and the Path of Recovery with Kevin Griffin**  
**Saturday, November 14, 9:15 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

The recovery literature says we have to find God in order to get sober. Buddhism is known as a non-theistic religion. How can someone with a Buddhist orientation practice the Twelve-Steps? This workshop will focus on understanding the Dharma and its many aspects as “Higher Powers.”

Kevin Griffin is the author of *One Breath at a Time: Buddhism and the Twelve Steps* and the forthcoming *A Burning Desire: Dharma God and the Path of Recovery*. He was trained as a Community Dharma Leader at Spirit Rock Meditation Center and is a co-founder of the Buddhist Recovery Network, an international organization supporting training and research into the uses of mindfulness and Buddhist teachings in addiction treatment. For more information, see [www.kevingriffin.net](http://www.kevingriffin.net).

**MONTHLY EVENING DHARMA**

Please join us for these special evenings of dharma (spiritual teachings) and connection with the Common Ground community. This monthly drop-in program is an opportunity to hear guest teachers and experienced community members speak about their practice. The evening begins with a 30-minute meditation period followed by a talk and discussion. The evening concludes with informal social time, tea, and treats.

**with Steve Armstrong: Meditation and Healing**

See Workshops for his bio.

**Friday, September 11, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**with Annie Nugent: Wise Speech**

Annie Nugent has been practicing since 1979 and was the resident teacher at IMS from 1999 to 2003. Her teaching style aims to reveal how all aspects of our lives can help us come to a clear and direct understanding of the Truth.

**Tuesday, October 13, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**with Kevin Griffin: The Power of Karma**

The Buddha said that it is the Law of Karma that allows us to move toward freedom. His teachings show us how to live in harmony with this law. This talk will explore the transformative power of the Law of Karma. See Workshops for bio.

**Friday, November 13, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**with Henry Emmons: All Will Be Well, Cultivating Calm in Times of Chaos**

Psychiatrist Henry Emmons, M.D., is a consultant to seven Twin Cities college counseling centers as well as several other organizations and a popular workshop presenter. He is a past recipient of a Bush Medical Fellowship, which funded a sabbatical to study natural and mindfulness therapies in the practice of psychiatry. He has created adult education programs through the University's Center for Spirituality and Healing, including "A Year of Living Mindfully," and "The Inner Life of Healers: Programs of Renewal for Health Professionals. Dr. Emmons developed the "Resilience Training Program" for the Penny George Institute for Health and Healing. This unique program integrates nutrition, exercise, and the psychology of mindfulness to improve outcomes in the treatment of depression. His book *The Chemistry of Joy: A Three-step Program for Overcoming Depression through Western Science and Eastern Wisdom* was published by Simon and Schuster in January 2006.

**Saturday, November 21, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**with Ajahn Punnadhammo**

Ajahn Punnadhammo began practicing and studying Buddhism under the direction of Kema Ananda at the Arrow River Forest Hermitage near Thunder Bay. In 1990, he went to Thailand to seek ordination, taking the higher ordination in February 1992 at Wat Pah Nanachat, in the tradition of Ajahn Chah. He took over direction of the Hermitage when Kema Ananda passed away in 1996. He frequently leads meditation retreats at Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts.

**Saturday, December 11, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

## **MEDITATION RETREATS**

### **The Practice of Tranquility and Insight**

Retreating from the distractions of daily life is an essential part of the path of awakening. Please join us for these important opportunities to deepen mindfulness. During retreats, we practice opening to the moment with stillness and non-judging awareness. Retreats include sitting and walking meditation, guided movement, talks on spiritual practice, and time for questions and discussion. Residential retreats include daily dharma talks and instruction, as well as practice interviews with the teacher. Those who are new to meditation should attend the intro class or several weekly practice groups before their first retreat. Please contact the center to register for retreats, unless otherwise noted.

#### **Half-Day Retreats with Mark Nunberg:**

Saturday, October 10, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Saturday, November 7, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

#### **Daylong Retreats with Mark Nunberg:**

Saturdays, September 26, October 31, November 28

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Please bring a bag lunch.)

### **Residential Retreat at Holy Spirit Retreat Center with Mark Nunberg**

Thursday, November 12 at 5 pm to Sunday, November 15 at noon; contact the retreat committee at [commongroundretreats@gmail.com](mailto:commongroundretreats@gmail.com). Registration begins September 12.

### **TCVC Residential Retreat with Annie Nugent**

October 9 to 13. Visit [www.tevc.info](http://www.tevc.info) for more information.

## **COMMUNITY PRACTICE GROUPS**

### **Full Moon Peace Walks**

Please join us for our monthly Full Moon Peace Walk, which includes chanting, a mindful outdoor walk, and sitting meditation. Weather permitting, the walking and sitting take place outdoors, so dress appropriately and bring a flashlight and an old blanket to put on the ground if you would like. No registration necessary.

**Thursday September 3, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Monday October 5, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Monday November 2, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Thursday December 3, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**

### **Dharma Friends**

Dharma Friends is a drop-in practice/social group for young adult practitioners ("20-30 somethings") in the Common Ground community. This group normally meets at the J&S Coffee shop meeting room (1342 Thomas Ave, St Paul 55014), but occasionally meets elsewhere for additional social activities. At our meetings, we take 20 minutes to chat and socialize, followed by a 10-minute meditation, then check-in and group discussion. We choose one book per quarter to read and discuss at our meetings; however, reading the book is not required for participation.

**Third Saturday of the month, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

For more information, contact Cole at [colekampen@gmail.com](mailto:colekampen@gmail.com) or Jimmy at [jim@audiorukusrecording.com](mailto:jim@audiorukusrecording.com)

### **Chant and Song: An Evening of Sound and Silence**

Come join voices as we create the space for opening to joy, compassion, lovingkindness, and equanimity. This guided session of chanting and singing is open to all - no musical experience required. Tea and social time follows. Led by Scott Jensen and Robin Blake.

**Last Saturday of the month: September 26, October 31, November 28, 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.**

## **YOGA AND QIGONG**

### **Mindful Yoga Weekly Drop-In Practice**

Mindful Yoga is the practice of extending awareness into the physical experience of hatha yoga. The yoga poses provide an opportunity to consciously cultivate a wholesome, joyful relationship with the body. This series is open to adults of all ages, including those with little or no background in yoga. This class will introduce a basic sequence of yoga poses, emphasizing mindfulness of breathing and sensation. The poses not only cultivate a compassionate friendship with the body, but also prepare the body and mind for deeper states of meditation. With practice, mindful yoga supports wise attention in all of our daily activities. Led by Nancy Boler.

**Wednesdays, 5:30 – 6:45 p.m. No need to register, just come.**

Nancy Boler was introduced to yoga in 1994 while in the Peace Corps in Nepal. She began her formal practice in 1997 and was certified in 2000 at the Kripalu Center for Yoga in Lenox, Massachusetts. She continues training at Kripalu and also studies Iyengar yoga in Minneapolis.

### **Drop-in Qigong**

Qigong is a deeply satisfying healing practice that integrates mindful awareness, breath, and movement. This practice develops relaxation, concentration, and vitality. Please join us. Led by Mark Nunberg and Merrra Young.

**Wednesdays, 9:05 – 10:05 a.m., ongoing**

## **MINDFULNESS IN THE TWELVE STEPS**

### **Weekly Practice Group**

This ongoing program is for those seeking spiritual development by practicing the principles of the Twelve Steps and the Buddha's teachings in everyday life. This program supplements recovery and is designed to reveal to us that consistent mindfulness practice is vital to spiritual progress. This ongoing practice group meets the second, third, and fourth Friday of each month and is open to all who have an interest in mindfulness and the Twelve Steps. Led by Craig V.

**Fridays, 7:00 – 8:15 p.m. except the first Friday of each month.**

### **Twelve-Step Recovery and Mindfulness Meditation Retreat**

This retreat is an opportunity for Twelve-Step people to come together and experience half a day of quiet meditation. These four hours without distractions provide a unique opportunity for self-discovery. We will have periods of sitting meditation, walking meditation, group discussion, a short talk, and a mid-afternoon break for tea and walking outdoors. The environment will be informal and the instructions simple. No previous meditation retreat experience necessary. Led by Craig V.

**Saturday, September 19, 1:30 – 5:30 p.m.**

## **SUPPORTING COMMON GROUND**

**Continuing a tradition** from the Buddhist monasteries in Southeast Asia, all programs are offered free of charge in the spirit of generosity. This offering is possible because of the generosity of people like you who wish to support the continuation of the center.

**Mindful giving and receiving** frees the heart of clinging. Please join us in the practice of generosity, which leads to both joy and wisdom. Because each person's circumstances are different, we do not provide suggested donations or constant reminders to give. The center, however, is completely dependent on your gifts.

**Your contributions** pay for all the center's expenses, provide Mark's livelihood, support our teachers, maintain the center's building, and pay the mortgage and our administrative staff.

- You may leave financial donations in the dana bowl at the center or mail your gift to 2700 E. 26th St. Mpls, 55406.
- To make a gift online, visit: [www.commongroundmeditation.org](http://www.commongroundmeditation.org) and click on Supporting Common Ground.

- If it is convenient for you to schedule electronic deductions on a regular basis, it helps simplify the center's bookkeeping. You can either schedule regular deductions from a credit card at [www.NetworkforGood.org](http://www.NetworkforGood.org) (search for Common Ground Meditation Center). Or you can contact your bank for instructions on setting up electronic payments from your account, then get the center's account information from Debbie at [Debbie@commongroundmeditation.org](mailto:Debbie@commongroundmeditation.org).

**Volunteers** do many of the center's day-to-day tasks. Please email [debbie@commongroundmeditation.org](mailto:debbie@commongroundmeditation.org) if you have time and skills that you would like to contribute.

The generosity of your practice and financial support make this center a great resource for us all. All contributions to Common Ground are tax deductible.

## **COMMON GROUND LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS**

### **Guiding Teacher**

Mark Nunberg

### **Office Manager**

Debbie Norgaard

### **Board of Directors**

Board Chair: Renie Howard; Vice Chair: Gail Iverson; Treasurer: Kay Christianson; Secretary: Wynn Fricke; Director: Jean Choe; Guiding Teacher: Mark Nunberg

### **Advisory Board**

Steve Armstrong, James Baraz, Joseph Goldstein, Kamala Masters

### **Program Teachers**

Gail Iverson, Craig Vollmar, Merra Young, Nancy Boler

### **Community Group Facilitators**

Adrian Strinmoen, Sue Magee, Dick Jones, Steve Burt, Melis Arik, Marta Fahrenz, John Russell, Kate & Corey Needleman, MaryAnn & Hans deRuitter, Julie Corty, Kathleen Zuckerman, Cole McVey, Jimmy Schnobrich, Ramesh Sairam, Merra Young, Kyoko Katayama, Elena Walker, Jan and Mark Young, Robb Reed, Paul Sackarof, Becca Kazmierczak, Jen Alexander, Scott Jensen, Sue Cochrane, Kari Binning, Josh Allard, Jeff Jones, Jeff Roehl, Dennis Gilsdorf, Robin Blake

### **Practice Leaders**

Diane Nunberg, Peter Fleck, Mary Weber, Gail Iverson, Jean Fagerstrom, Mimi Jennings, Scott Jensen, Sharon Barnett, Mary McCann, Damon Rohwer, Joanne Skarjune, Jeffrey Swainhart, Christie Milczanowski, Jonna Simonson

### **Committee Members**

Kyoko Katayama, Craig Vollmar, Jean Choe, Amy Searing, Jean Fagerstrom, Mary McCann, Sarah Elizabeth, Scott Jensen, Eric Stull, Doug Swanson, Julie Corty, Jymme Golden, Dick Jones, Debbie Norgaard, Jessie WareJoncas, Kendrick Wronski, Kathleen Zuckerman

**Audio Archiving:** Tom Gullett, Jimmy Schnobrich, Todd Stitt, Gabe Keller, Casey Nordendale, Stan Johnson

**Blog and Twitter:** Scott Russell, Peter Fleck

**Bulletin Board:** Patty Martinson

**Bookkeepers:** Steve Burt, Mimi Jennings, Sue Magee

**Bulk Mail Coordinator:** Betsy Blume

**Cleaning Leaders:** Julian Pennington, Dick Jones

**Flowers and Plants:** Kyoko Katayama

**Garden Team:** Jennie Ross, Laurie MacLeod

**Librarian:** Mark Berge

**Office Tech Support:** Todd Stitt, Casey Nordendale

**Office Volunteers:** Patti Sloan, Andrea Grey, Julie Nordendale, Nancy Boler, Sharon Slettehaugh, Shelly Graf, Judith Brook

**Program Hosts:** Jim Schaldach, Mona Semanko, Jerry Sykora, Cole McVey, Shelly Graf, Damon Rohwer, Cindy Pratt, Jan Young, John Prest, Salina Amey, Matt Buzzard, Dave Halsey, Greg Olson

**Publications Designer:** Barbara Wulf

**Publications Editors:** Louise Delagran, Renie Howard, Patti Sloan

**Publications Proofreader:** Robin Blake

**Special Projects:** Bonnie Fournier, Kathleen Zuckerman, Edwin Beylerian, Mary McCann

**Residential Retreat Staff:** Jean Fagerstrom, Jen Grimes, Mary McCann, Amy Searing, Damon Rohwer, Scott Jensen, Jennie Ross, Salina Amey, Elena Walker, Jana Larson, Sarah Elizabeth, Leigh Rosenberg, Matt Buzzard, Kim Klisch, Denny Johnson, John & Gayle Prest, Nancy Vivian

**Webmasters:** David Skarjune, Jill Meyer

**New Web Design:** David Fleming

## **Statement of Purpose**

Common Ground is a community meditation center dedicated to the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the practice of being present with the moment and learning to be at ease with the unfolding conditions of life. With practice, mindfulness reveals deep wisdom, compassion, and freedom. Common Ground is an independent center founded on the teachings of the Buddha. This center follows in the spirit of Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, and Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California and is part of the greater insight meditation, or vipassana, community in the West. Common Ground welcomes skillful means from all Buddhist traditions as well as other spiritual traditions dedicated to wisdom and compassion.

“What is the ripening of suffering? When someone is overcome, and her mind is obsessed by suffering, either she sorrows and laments, and beating her breast, she weeps and becomes distraught, or else she undertakes a search externally: ‘Who is there that knows one word, two words, for the cessation of suffering?’ I say that suffering either ripens in confusion or in search.”

The Buddha

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Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406

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