

Common Ground Meditation Center

Supporting the Twin Cities Mindfulness Meditation Community

Practicing Together in the Footsteps of the Buddha

Newsletter September - December 2008

Dear Common Ground Friends,

A famous collection of Buddhist teachings called the Dhammapada begins with the line, “Mind is the forerunner of conditions. Mind is their leader, and they are mind made.” The verse points out the deep truth that the degree of purity of the mind in any moment inevitably influences our thoughts, words, and actions, which, in turn, have repercussions for our heart and for the world. “If with an impure mind you speak or act, then sorrow comes after you even as the wheel of the cart follows the ox's hoof... If with a pure mind you speak or act, then happiness comes after you like your never-departing shadow.”

At first we might be intimidated by the responsibility implied by this teaching. It seems that it would be easier if we could allow conditions to unfold however they do. Upon more reflection, this teaching is empowering. It points to a path of training where practitioners develop skill in orienting the mind toward wholesome states and away from unwholesome states. This is not a grim task. Who would be averse to orienting the mind toward states that come with bliss, ease, and a feeling of wholeness and peace? As the Buddha said, “Good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end.”

As we traverse the ups and downs in our lives and in the world (the fall election, our move to our new building), let's remember that our primary responsibility is to orient the mind toward what is wholesome, for example, clarity, kindness, appreciative joy, equanimity, and compassion. We can become more fearless and skillful in questioning the identification with attachment and aversion. This training is the foundation of the Buddha's path of awakening. The happiness that follows creates the supporting conditions for deep insight and freedom to arise in our lives.

Wishing everyone a peaceful fall,
Mark Nunberg, Guiding Teacher

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT COMMON GROUND

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 Six Thursdays with Mark Nunberg, September 11 - October 16, 7:30- 9:00p.m. or
Intro Workshop with Gail Iverson December 7, 1:30- 5:00p.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- 9:00a.m.

Sunday Mornings 8:00a.m.- noon

Tuesday Evenings 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Drop-In Weekly Practice Groups

The weekly practice groups are designed to be a cornerstone for one's practice. These weekly gatherings provide ongoing instruction and teachings that help illuminate the simple but very challenging practice of mindfulness. Insight (vipassana) meditation is an ancient path taught by the Buddha. It is designed to replace our habits of distraction and confusion with clear seeing and insight. To walk this path of wisdom and compassion, we need the support of a community that shares this intention. Please join us for this weekly practice time. Includes a 30-minute guided meditation, dharma talk, and discussion for both experienced and beginning meditators. Led by Mark Nunberg.

Wednesdays, 7:30- 9:00p.m., or Sundays, 7:00- 8:30p.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 5, October 3, November 7, and December 5, 7:00- 8:30p.m.

Buddhist Studies Program Karma and Dependent Origination

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 understanding through the study and application of the teachings of the Buddha. In this eight-week course, we will explore the Buddha's teachings on Karma and Dependent Origination, which point to the conditional and interdependent nature of the unfolding stream of experience. It is the deepening of this reflection that leads to insight into anatta, the impersonal nature of all phenomena. Participants will be expected to use the teachings as a focus of their meditation and daily practice. Led by Mark Nunberg.

Eight Mondays, September 15 - November 3, 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Optional sitting period, 7:00- 7:30p.m.

Community Refuges and Precepts Recitation and Potluck

Our quarterly community gatherings are preceded by the regularly scheduled open sitting time from 8 - 11 a.m. At 11 a.m., Mark Nunberg will give a dharma talk followed by a short refuge and precept recitation. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet the community that practices at Common Ground and to recommit to living a life dedicated to kindness, generosity, and the awakening of wisdom and compassion. The potluck begins at noon. Feel free to bring along family or friends. If you plan to come to the sit or talk, you can store your food in the refrigerator in the basement until the potluck begins. No registration is necessary.

Sundays, September 28 and December 21, 11 a.m. - 1:00p.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- to 45-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.



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 nonjudging 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. Led by Mark Nunberg unless otherwise noted.

Half-Day Retreats:

Saturdays, September 6, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., October 11, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., and November 1, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Daylong Retreats:

Saturdays, September 27, October 25, and December 13 (with Ajahn Punnadhammo), 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
(Please bring a bag lunch.)

Residential Retreat at Holy Spirit Retreat Center:

Thursday, November 13 – Sunday, November 16; contact Amy Searing at amysearing@earthlink.net.
Registration begins September 19.

16th Annual Year End Retreat:

Saturday, December 27 – Wednesday, December 31 at noon. Registration available mid-November via email or at the center.

TCVC Residential Retreat with Santikaro:

October 10–14. Contact Gail Iverson (612-721-8626) or visit www.tcvv.info for more information.



COMMUNITY PRACTICE GROUPS

Full Moon Peace Walks

Please join us for our monthly full moon peace walk. The full moon is a traditional time for Buddhists to go to the local temple or monastery to practice walking and sitting meditation through the night. Our monthly Full Moon Peace Walks include 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.

Tuesday, September 16, 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Tuesday, October 14, 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Thursday, November 13, 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Thursday, December 11, 7:30- 9:00p.m.

Family Practice Group

This monthly practice group is now led and organized by the participating parents and children. Together we practice, play, and share how mindfulness, wisdom, and compassion can be expressed in our lives, our homes, and in the world.

Sessions address Buddhist teachings using songs, games, guided meditations, and hands-on activities. Each gathering concludes with a potluck. The program is designed for children who are approximately 6–14 years old and the people who care about them. Please email Kendrick Wronski (KWronski@aol.com) if interested in attending.

Second Sunday of every month, 4:00- 6:00 p.m.

Mindful Parenting: Practice and Discussion Group

This group is for parents of young children who wish to connect with other parents and introduce their children (infants to age five) into the community. The group will share experiences and ideas about practicing skillful parenting. Sessions include interactive time with children, such as song, breathing, and games to introduce concepts of mindfulness and meditation. Parents may choose to separate from their children at the end for a short guided meditation and discussion.

Third Sunday of every month, 3:00- 4:45 p.m. (Formal practice begins at 3:15.)

For more information contact Kate or Corey Needleman at okneedleman@gmail.com, or MaryAnn deRuiter at maderuiter@gmail.com.

Mindfulness and Physical Pain

This monthly drop-in program is for those seeking to develop a different relationship to pain through the practice of mindfulness. This practice of non-judgment and non-interference is a skill that not only helps with managing pain, but affects all aspects of our lives. Each session will consist of a guided meditation on working with pain and a time for discussion and sharing. Led by Gail Iverson and Ramesh Sairam.

Thursday, August 28 and Tuesday, September 23 or 30 TBD, 6:00- 7:15 p.m. (future dates to be announced).

For more information contact: info@commongroundmeditation.org.



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.

Saturday, September 20, 7:00- 9:00 p.m., *The Mass Media as Spiritual Practice*, with Doug McGill.

Doug is a freelance journalist, Adjunct Professor of Journalism at Carleton College, and a former *New York Times* reporter and bureau chief for Bloomberg News in Tokyo, London, and Hong Kong. He has been meditating for ten years and started a weekly sitting group and sangha in Rochester in 2004. Doug will offer a dharma perspective on the mass media as a distinctly modern expression of desire, aversion, and delusion, and also as a profound opportunity to practice the development of wholesome states of mind.

Sunday, November 23, 7:00- 9:00 p.m., *Suffering from the Perspective of the Buddha and St. John of the Cross*, with Mary Jo Meadows.

Mary Jo has meditated for more than 45 years in three traditions. A Catholic sister vowed to the Theravadan nuns' precepts and the mother of eight adult children, she teaches vipassana in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. She is professor emerita of psychology and religious studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. She offers spiritual guidance and writes and lectures on spirituality.

Friday, December 12, 7:00- 9:00 p.m., *To be announced*, with Ajahn Punnadhammo.

Ajahn Punnadhammo was born in Toronto in 1955. He 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 returned to Canada in 1995, taking 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. For more information about Arrow River, visit www.arrowriver.ca.



WORKSHOPS

Saturday November 22, 1:00- 5:00 p.m *Early Buddhist Teachings and the Indian Cultural Matrix*, with Rita Gross.

This workshop examines the historical context for the arising of the Buddha as a teacher and the cultural and philosophical environment in which these teachings were first offered. 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.

Living the Practice Workshop Series

The Living the Practice Workshop Series is designed for people who have an on-going mindfulness practice and want to integrate the practice more thoroughly into all aspects of life. These workshops will include talks about the Buddha's teachings related to specific topics, time for guided reflection, small and large group sharing and process work, and guided meditation periods. The lunch break will include time for informal discussion and social time.

Saturday, December 20th, 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. *Cultivating Wholesome Relationships*, with Mark Nunberg

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 with other beings. This workshop will explore what the Buddha said about relationships and how to use the teachings and practices to support the arising and maintenance of wholesome relationships. In particular we will explore the distinction between intimacy and attachment and between judgment and seeing the other person clearly. Finally, we will take a look at how we have all been conditioned to believe certain things about relationships that might be limiting and a cause for suffering.



YOGA AND QIGONG

Mindful Yoga

Mindful Yoga is the practice of extending mindful awareness into the physical experience of hatha yoga. The yoga poses provide an opportunity to consciously cultivate a wholesome, joyful relationship with the body.

Mindful Yoga Weekly Practice: 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 mindful awareness 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. Please contact the center to register. Led by Nancy Boler.

Seven Wednesdays, September 3 - October 22, 5:30- 6:45 p.m.

Registration begins August 3. (No class on September 17.)

Eight Wednesdays, October 29 - December 17, 5:30- 6:45 p.m.

Registration begins October 3.

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 with William Prottengeier. Nancy has been a regular participant at Common Ground for several years.

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- 8:15p.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, November 8, 1:00- 5:00p.m.

Forgiveness Workshop

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. Led by Craig V.

Saturday, October 4, 1:00- 4:00p.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, support guest teachers, and provide Mark's livelihood. You may leave donations in the bowl in the entranceway or let Mark know 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 and Executive Director

Mark Nunberg

Board of Directors

Board Chair : Renie Howard; Vice Chair: Mariann Johnson; Treasurer: Kay Christianson; Secretary: Wynn Fricke; Director: Gail Iverson;

Guiding Teacher: Mark Nunberg

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Gail Iverson, Craig Vollmar, Merrra Young, Nancy Boler, Veronica Weadock,

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Adrian Strinmoen, Sue Magee, Kate & Corey Needleman, MaryAnn & Hans deRuiter, Julie Corty, Kathleen Zuckerman, Cole McVey, Jimmy Schnobirch, Kendrick Wronski, Ramesh Sairam

Office Manager

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Volunteer Staff

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Bookkeepers: Steve Burt, Mimi Jennings, Sue Magee

Bulk Mail Coordinator: Betsy Blume

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Communications Specialist: Scott Russell

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Flowers and Plants: Diane Nunberg and Kyoko Katayama

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Office Tech Support: Todd Stitt

Office Volunteers: Patti Sloan, Andrea McAvey; Mary McCann, Sharon Barnett, Joanne Skarjune, Damon Rohwer; Shoshana Sagner, Nancy Boler

Practice Leaders: Diane Nunberg, Amy Searing, Peter Fleck, Mary Weber,

Gail Iverson, Jean Fagerstrom, Dave Brus, Merrin Young, Mimi Jennings,

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Web Master: David Skarjune and Jill Meyer; Web Design: David Fleming;

Web Email Support: Todd Stitt; Web Content: Sharon Barnett; Web Advisors: Tom Gullett, Arif Mamdani,

New Building Transition Team

Architect: Rick Okada, Construction Manager: David Asselstine,

Other Team Members: Mark Nunberg, Jean Hammink, Kevin Wallace, Mary McCann, Fred Howe, Debbie Norgaard, Kyoko Katayama,

Robin Blake, Julie Corty



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 intimacy. 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.

Mind is the forerunner of conditions.

Mind is their leader, and they are mind made.

*If with an impure mind you speak or act, then sorrow comes after you
even as the wheel of the cart follows the ox's hoof.*

Mind is the forerunner of conditions.

Mind is their leader, and they are mind made.

*If with a pure mind you speak or act, then happiness comes
after you like your never-departing shadow.*

— the Buddha

Common Ground Meditation Center

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www.commongroundmeditation.org