



Annual Sangha Meeting

Survey Results

Sunday, May 1, 2011

12 Noon – 1:30 pm

Selected Responses -

General Information

1. Which of the following programs offered by DSC do you attend or have attended in the past?

%	Responses	
10.5%	61	- Meditation (Classes)
9.3	54	a. Retreats
9.2	53	- weekend (Retreats)
7.9	46	b. Classes
7.2	42	- Sunday (Meditation sittings)
6.9	40	- one day (Retreats)
6.5	38	d. Barbara & Aaron evenings
6.5	38	c. Meditation sittings
6.0	35	h. Annual Sangha meeting
5.7	33	Spiritual Inquiry (Classes)
5.3	31	- one week long (Retreats)
4.6	27	i. Social events
3.9	23	g. Kalyana Mitra groups (spiritual friends)
2.6	15	e. Tuesday noon healing circle
2.4	14	- Tuesday morning (Meditation sittings)
1.0		View "Other" Answers "Other" Answers
0.8	5	- Friday morning (Meditation sittings)

Responses:

- I'm finding difficulty in attending the classes consistently, and the cost is a strain on my budget, so may not do any again.
- I just started meditation classes this past Septemeber and I am looking forward to a time when I can attend a retreat.
- The times offered for meditation sittings do not fit in my schedule, though I would love to have the oppportunity to come to DSC and just sit.
- I love the retreats, the longer the better.
- Mostly interested in drop-in events at this point.
- Retreats and meditation classes are the most valuable to me.
- I love you guys!
- Like the book discussions, too, that Phil held. And the potlucks especially on New Year's Day and other holidays that singles are often alone.

Retreats

2. Are financial reasons keeping you from attending retreats?

%	Responses	
67.1	47	No
32.8	23	Yes

Responses:

- I cannot attend all of the reatreats that I would like to attend, but am usually able to get to at least one short one/year
- Generally, I feel I could attend one weekend or week long retreat a year. THE cost of the retreat and the time off from work are factors from doing more than
- Sometimes finances are more limited, and there may be competing needs for the funds that are available.
- I usually go to one per year
- Financial reasons are always part of my decision about retreats, but not necessarily the deciding factor
- There is a limit to what I would be able to spend on a retreat.
- I have a certain amount of money I devote to retreats and I spread it among a variety of retreats that meet my needs at the time.

- There should be a sliding scale (going to zero) or scholarships for those who can't afford anything. [Yes]
- I don't like the accommodations that are offered at the DSC retreats. [No]

3. What are your preferences about retreat length?

%	Responses	
38.7	45	Weekend
31.8	37	one week long
29.3	34	one day

Responses:

- I like the 1 day get-aways, but find more benefit in the longer retreats.
- I've never been on a retreat, so I would want a one-day retreat first to try it out. Anything longer is a big time commitment for something that has unknown value for me. After that I may appreciate a weekend or longer.
- I'm also interested in > 1 week long retreats.
- I love the longer retreats; would do a 2 weeker, maybe with Barbara there initially, then retreatants on their own.
- One day is too short.
- Shorter provide support when money is low and/or time is short. Longer is where the deeper experiences tend to occur.
- Weeklong retreats allow us to really get a good look at our stuff.
- A week or longer.
- Half-week or full week.

4. What type of retreat would you prefer and why?

%	Responses	
71.4	50	Residential
28.5	20	Non-residential

Responses:

- For a one-day, non-residential makes sense, as long as it is within a 2 hr drive from Ann Arbor. For longer retreats located in Ann Arbor or fairly close by, I would also prefer to come home at night. I think it could be useful to 'dip' back into real life in the midst of a transformational experience - also it's always more comfortable sleeping at home for me. If the retreat location is farther away then there is the incentive to stay overnight and I would probably enjoy the total immersion and the community building that happens during extended stays with other people.
- Both options.
- Residential retreat allows me to stay more centered and go deeper into my meditation.
- I could have checked both boxes. The residential is best as it allows you to get away from ordinary life and really commit to the retreat. But non-residential can.
- Commuting disrupts the intent of a retreat. And a non-residential retreat is better than no retreat.
- I like both, depending upon my schedule.
- Do not want to travel back and forth----too disruptive.
- Both have their place. A residential one allows for more spiritual growth than a non-residential one; while non-residential ones require less financial outlay on the part of the attendee.
- Tenting is good for me.
- Both are necessary for my practice. Residential allows for a deeper sinking into the silence but the retreat without walls that the Weirs do and other retreats are valuable because they allow the interface of mindfulness on the cushion and off.
- Leaving the retreat space tends to disrupt my ability to go deep. The focus necessarily has to include other things and the energy outside the retreat center is not supportive.
- Sue and Lou's intensive in January is great!
- Both have value. non-residential is much easier for me.
- I prefer residential retreats! Easier, supports overall retreat experience.
- Enjoy the deeper experience of being in residence.
- Residential is a better experience but non residential are less money.
- More focus when staying in one location [Residential].
- Right now commuter is the only kind that works for me, but someday I'd like a residential retreat.
- Residential retreats are more immersive, though I've done non residential where it was more affordable.
- Doesn't seem like a "retreat" if it isn't residential.

- I actually love both. The advantage of residential is the ability to reflect outside of the pressures from one's family life.

5. Would you like to see a particular teacher(s) at retreats?

Responses:

All (or Most) Deep Spring teachers received some mention in response to this question. Barbara, Aaron and/or John Orr were named in nearly half (10 of 22) recorded responses. Only two potential teachers (Ajahn Thanasanti [twice] and John McLeod) were suggested outside the current, customary pool of Deep Spring teachers.

6. Is there any particular Dharma topic you would like to be offered at retreats?

Responses:

- I find that what I need generally comes up. I feel the teachers cover the basics. I think it is important to not get too cerebral during retreat. I really like the personal retreat format so that I may seek deeper silence as I am drawn to it.
- I am reading Sylvia Boorstein's book, "Pay Attention", about different Dharma topics - I'd be happy to continue to learn more about all of them.
- I don't know enough to know.
- I'd like to see a retreat focused on forgiveness with support to work through obstacles to being able to forgive.
- I always love to hear about the traditional Buddhist teachings and how to apply them in current day living.
- Crystals, connecting with our guides.
- What has been done in the past is helpful.
- The retreat focusing on the chain of dependent origination last spring was excellent!
- What is my best approach when I feel "stuck" in a given stage for a long period of time?
- What do you include in "Dharma"? If it is largely Vipassana and related practices, then why not offer also all the many Aaron non-Vipassana teachings as well. All the teachings interweave and support each other. In the early days of DSC, some people came in the Spiritual Inquiry door and moved to Vipassana and some came in the Vipassana door and moved to Spiritual Inquiry. Lets include everyone. Topics like teaching support practices that help one open and get through difficult spots in Practice would be good. e.g. Toning, Chanting, Breathwork, particular yoga postures, particular breathing, working with guides.
- Metta fear compassion for oneself/self love/dealing with sense of unworthiness.

- Emptiness.
- No. Regardless of the topic offered, the Dharma is the Dharma. I find myself hearing what I need to hear.
- Dealing with difficult emotions.
- 4 Foundations is one of my favorites.
- Each teacher has been most perceptive in selecting topics. Let them do it.
- Fear.
- Compassion.
- Small group discussions would be nice, to get to know others, share ideas, comraderie, etc.

Classes

7. Are finances keeping you from attending classes?

%	Response	
87.5	56	No
12.5	8	Yes

8. What instructional level of meditation classes are you interested in attending?

%	Responses	
51.8	41	Intermediate
41.7	33	Advanced
6.3	5	Introductory

Responses:

- Advanced.
- I like on-going lessons in the fundamentals and I would like to be exposed to more advanced practices with experienced meditators.
- Need a greater variety of teachers at the intermediate level.
- Would like to have more in class time to meditate, less on discussion.
- On spaciousness, pure awareness, choiceless awareness, dzochen.

- Those of us who are Sangha members, have had the introductions; therefore, we are looking for intermediate and advanced instruction (which some retreats offer for those who can allocate the time).
- We seem to provide Introductory/Intermediate and Continuing with a stable group of people. We seem to be missing Advanced topics of a shorter class duration.
- I am not a beginner but I'm not sure I know what constitutes advanced practice. [Intermediate].

9. What topics related to meditation practice would be most helpful/of most interest to you?

Responses:

- Is there anyone who specializes in the meditation experience unique to women?
- Motivational...how to keep a consistent practice.
- Forgiveness. Meditation practice off the cushion.
- Support for ongoing secular meditation. Not the more "far out" teachings.
- selflessness 2. non-duality.
- For meditation, "Creating a loving container for Self and Others to support unfolding", "the spiritual path and levels of consciousness/path of purification", "pure awareness practice / dzogchen", "dependent origination", Working with other primary objects besides Breath, e.g. Energy, Nada.
- Listening to inner self self acceptance.
- Incorporation into daily living. I do not like classes with too much jargon.
- Relevance to daily life, the mind and consciousness.
- Nondual awareness Sutta study. Anything Aaron chooses to talk about.
- Whatever the teacher is interested in teaching.
- Continued Sutta study.
- Silent meditation.
- Initiating / sustaining a daily practice. Maybe monthlong challenge support groups 2 or 3 x year?
- I really enjoy sutta practice.
- Technique.
- I would enjoy a class which explored various meditation practices/techniques alongside Vipassana. Its helpful to have some guidance and encouragement so we might experiment with other forms of meditation without getting derailed and jumping from one practice to another.

- How to integrate meditation and spiritual practices in everyday life: with afflictive states, emotions and family/difficult people in one's life. That would be very helpful. Thanks.
- Maintaining / continuing.

10. What instructional level of Spiritual Inquiry classes are you interested in attending?

%	Responses	
41.1	25	Intermediate
41.3	24	Advanced
15.5	9	Introductory

Responses:

- Advanced
- These levels build on each other; while at the same time, a new round of introductory classes helps those who are ready to seek that level of spiritual training. Both Spiritual Inquiry and Meditation are needed for in-depth, long-term growth; and are complementary. Neither is sufficient alone, for the all-around Spiritual Seeker; because eventually you get to a place wherein you realize that there is more Than you have allowed yourself to be exposed to. At that point, the fear falls away, and one begins to embrace All-That-Is, without fear or shame.
- I am not exactly sure what constitutes what level.
- Been on spiritual journey many years.
- Not interested in spiritual inquiry; I'm running away from anything that sounds vaguely religious.

11. What topics related to Spiritual Inquiry would be most helpful/of most interest to you?

Responses:

- The movement into 4th density and the process.
- ???
- Not sure if this fits here...I am currently most drawn to the teachings of Adyashanti, Panache Desai, and Carolyn Myss these days.
- Why am I here? How can I help the world to come to the realization that there is another way? How can I be of service to my fellow Beings? How do I best accept where everyone is "at" in their personal spiritual development? How do I have the compassion and wisdom for dealing with all Beings, such that I accept their wishes for themselves as being as important as my wishes for myself. How do I make sure that I allow each person the level of "Free Will" in their spiritual aspirations, that I would hope that they will allow for me? How do I contribute to

opportunities being the best that they can be, for each soul who is travelling this earthly path; who is in this earthly school?; etc., etc.

- Release guilt & anger.
- How to live from a place of Love.
- Any topic covered in the Venture Fourth curriculum.
- Mindfulness classes -class on the life in the light of death (follow-up on One Year to Live).
- Impermanence (sp) Oneness.

12. Is there any particular day or time you prefer to attend class?

%	Responses	
35.2	43	Weekday evening
13.9	17	Weekend afternoon
12.2	15	Weekday afternoon
11.4	14	Weekday morning
10.6	13	Weekend noon
8.1	10	Weekday noon
8.1	10	Weekend morning

Responses:

- Not too early in the morning.
- 6-8 pm [weekday evening].
- More summer selections.
- Before Sunday sitting.
- Childcare and other family commitments are an issue [no preferences checked].
- Sunday after the sitting is perhaps an underutilized time.
- Evening and weekends are best.

13. Would you like to have more access to Aaron with a focus on Spiritual Inquiry (rather than as a mediation class)? If so, would your preference be

%	Responses	
54.5	24	an occasional ½ day or day long workshop
45.4	20	an ongoing Spiritual Inquiry class

Responses:

- This would be great if weekly classes were conducted by Aaron. when these were held in Barbara's living room we got to great depths and was delicious AND nutritious.
- I have taken Spiritual Inquiry classes with Aaron in the past and really enjoyed and benefitted from them.
- Drop-in events nice.
- I experience Aaron and Barbara as the same being. I don't need to understand too much about them as separate beings. But I think the idea of "channeling" is off putting to some people, and I hope Deep Spring can continue to be great for offering "insight" or "theravedic," or "vipassana" meditation, with Barbara as the guiding teacher. Namaste.
- Class that meets in the summer also.

Note: Several people commented that they did not understand, resonate with, or feel comfortable working with Aaron.

14. What can Deep Spring Center do, or continue to do, to provide the support you need for your individual practice? What is most important to you?

Responses:

- I'd like to purchase a sitting cushion and it would be helpful to be able to do that at the Center or have a convenient resource shared.
- I appreciate all that you offer.
- A small group (5-6) that I can get together with (in homes?) to do a book study and discussion together?
- I believe DSC has offered much support...I know its there, though not always able to fit as much into my busy schedule as I'd like.
- The continuance of weekend & longer retreats.
- Maintain the variety of classes and sittings.
- The sangha being the sangha
- Continue to provide Meditation; and Aaron's teachings.
- The group sittings on Tuesdays and Fridays are particularly important for me, as well as the informal sangha discussions following. In addition, classes I have had with Susan Weir have been most important for me.

- Just stay open.
- Sunday sittings, Healing Circle, retreats with advanced topics that have not be taught before -- like some of the material in Venture Fourth, online classes and/or classes where a conference phone & paid phone minutes are available where we can continue to interact with people who have moved out-of-state or out of night driving range and can invite those who have participated in our retreats. Other connections for Sangha, someway to share distribution lists if people opt in, like for requests for loving support for people in need. Service directory, like Zen Temple, where people can put what services they offer and we can not only support each other but also know that we will receive services based in the Dharma and in Love.
- Offer free classes.
- More retreat opportunities, full day or weekends. Would give me more choice. Today there are very few choices.
- Noon and afternoon sittings with some sharing afterward.
- Growth in meditation and mindfulness practice.
- Service projects.
- Mechanisms that bring the Sangha together, either by socializing, volunteering, sessions just to share and support for the practice and in life.
- The news letter and web sight are good resources for us.
- Provide mentors.
- Continue offering Sunday meditation sitting continue offering inspiring classes.
- I love it the way things are.
- Meditation, awareness, mindfulness.
- A community to practice with. I really like the Sunday sittings with the listening without cross talk. Knowing that there's classes / retreats when I'm ready.
- Morning meditation is most important for me.
- Long-term classes (a few years) are great for me -- i love the sustained practice path in the class. with a busy family life it's also challenging to enroll in a new class (usually at a different time) each term.
- Perhaps drop in meditation after work (6-6:30 or 5:30-6:15). I'm not generally a morning meditator.
- Provide space for regular group sittings (with or without "teaching"), sponsor retreats.

- I always feel a little happier when I have a Deep Spring class to look forward to. I'm getting to know lots more people in the sangha and forming some wonderful friendships. Could more classes be offered at people's homes with class fees going to Deep Spring? Classes seem to be limited to Rec and Ed or else to one or two places only.
- Offer mentors.

Note: All responses were anonymous.