

Jewel Heart Meeting Ann Arbor All Sangha Meeting April 22, 2016

Notes taken by Jess Willyard and Barb Shoffner
Approximately 50 people attended the meeting

1. **Welcome** – Akiko Yamada thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
2. **Long Life Prayer for Gelek Rimpoche** – Peter Arnesen led the prayer.
3. **JH Mission Statement** – Akiko Yamada read the statement. Jewel Heart Mission Statement: *Gelek Rimpoche's Jewel Heart is an educational and cultural institute whose doors are open to all. Its purpose is to transmit the essence of Tibetan Buddhism in an authentic and accessible way. Jewel Heart provides guidance and practical methods to anyone interested in spiritual development as well as to those who wish to engage in Buddhist practice.*
4. **Overview of 2015's All Sangha Meeting** – Akiko Yamada spoke about the meeting where the four major SC responsibilities (posters on the wall), the budget, fundraising, and Sangha member support were presented in terms of engaging from the heart. Our meeting tonight will focus on Sangha members supporting one another.
5. **Recap of Rimpoche's Talk, "Importance of Sangha"** – Supa Corner mentioned Rimpoche is a spiritual friend and the importance of talking with spiritual friends, working through our problems, forming groups and achieving togetherness. This is Sangha. Supa mentioned that we are very lucky to have Rimpoche giving so much to us, particularly here in Ann Arbor. We need to stay inspired and move forward.
6. **Our Outreach Activities** – Barbara Sloat shared how she became so passionate about outreach. She broke her ankle and was confined to a wheelchair for 3 months. She was so appreciative of assistance from friends, Barbara thought JH should formally organize a way for Sangha members to get help. She presented the idea to Sangha Council last year and volunteered to be a point person. She started sending cards, on behalf of the Sangha, to sick people, or in the case of loss or in celebration. She has sent 20 cards and always includes, "Let me know if there is something else we can do" along with her contact information. She has received grateful responses that can be 'fanned out' to others willing to help (for visits, food, calls, etc.). This kind of effort helps us feel connected to others. When His Holiness dedicated our building in 2008, he charged us with two activities: 1) Be ecumenical; Connect with other spiritual groups in the community. 2) Be of Service. How can I help? Tune in.... outreach.... how can we help? How do we support each other? How can our current outreach be encouraged and expanded?

7. **Discussion Summary** – Barb Shoffner

- a. Sangha Council (which is all who come to JH) supports our spiritual development (programs, teachers, dharma, sharing) and offers assistance for personal needs.
- b. The need to update the sangha council directory came to light. Barbara Sloat volunteered to lead the effort. Barbara Shoffner said she would help.
- c. There are so many different needs. Sangha members may just want a way to send requests and ask questions to a larger group. We could consider an email listing or blog. In the short-term inquiries can be sent to the Sangha Council or Dharma Coordinators.
- d. Kathy Laritz will add a note in the weekly email providing information of where to send sangha requests or provide information (“I miss you, but can’t attend talks or classes because ___.” or I need a bit of assistance or reason for prayers). Often people contact the office and the message is forwarded from there as well.
- e. We would like to create an FAQ as an insert for the Sangha Council brochure and possibly the website as well.
- f. Electronic connections are fine, but one on one visits are often the best in outreach.
- g. Rimpoche’s recent absence has highlighted the value of and need to rely on one another.
- h. Several people mentioned how when they first came to Jewel Heart it wasn’t clear who to talk to. Also, at times JH people appeared to be insular. Also shared was that over the years, many monks, guest speakers and others who have visited JH and other sanghas have high praise for our sangha as outstanding in their warmth and dedication to living the teachings.
- i. We are all ambassadors for JH and are recommended to be aware of new people and make them feel welcome. It was suggested to return to wearing the lanyards or perhaps make name tag labels available for new and existing sangha to wear on Sundays to help open conversations. The JH protocol has been to notice who is new and be welcoming as well as indicate folks that would be happy to meet with them and answer questions.
- j. We could have small discussion groups led by senior students. Note: this is occurring every Sunday after Rimpoche’s recorded talks.
- k. Building relationships in Sangha occur in formal and informal settings - at teachings, courses, on Sundays and through volunteering together at Jewel Heart.
- l. Perhaps Sangha Council could host orientation on a regular basis.
- m. How will we connect with people at the May 7th event?
- n. There are opportunities for JH to provide service with other faith-based organizations in SE Michigan. These requests can be sent to the Sangha Council and added to the agenda. Everyone is welcome to attend, present and discuss.
- o. A request was made to have the All Sangha Council meeting more than once per year.
- p. We are encouraging each other to be proactive in the Jewel Heart community as well as the need for more volunteers to implement great ideas.
- q. We are very fortunate to have our teacher, Gelek Rimpoche. And we are very fortunate to have Sangha to support spiritual development and one another.

8. **Dedication: Migtsema and Four Immeasurables** – Peter Arnesen led the dedication.

Announcement: Please contact Cathy Hufano if you have beds for out of town Sangha during retreat.