

**Community Care Working Group
Conference Call Minutes – Draft one
November 16th, 2004**

Present: Judith Broadus, Amy Conway, Jay Stewart, Alan Sloan

Action items are in red italics.

Presenting Community Care in Sangha wide conference calls with President Reoch and the December 4-6 Mandala Governing Council meeting:

Amy will be attending the Mandala Governing Council meeting Dec 4-7 to share our work with the MGC and help plan how to disseminate this work at the Congress. We discussed what to present at the MGC meeting. Amy will present our *Community Caring in Action* document along with an explanation of our resource list and how it is evolving. We plan to have the website of resources up by the Congress in 2005. Amy just received a summary of additional resources from Jane Condon. *Amy will add this to the resource list she has (currently in MS Word) and send it to the Community Care working group to review.*

We agreed not to present the Community exploration process at the MGC meeting. It feels premature and we don't want to overload people with information. Amy is part of a subgroup of working group chairs who are making recommendations for post Congress implementation. The other chairs on this implementation subgroup are from the Leadership and Succession group (Victoria Bell), Communications (Holly Gayley), Diversity and Accessibility (Cortez Rainey). We will wait and see what implementation plans come out of that subgroup. Jay thought it would be better for the sangha to show interest in our work first and then ASK us for implementation suggestions instead of giving them more materials up front.

President Reoch will hold conference calls to kick start pre-Congress discussions December 8th. Specific calls on Membership, **Community Care**, Diversity & Accessibility, and Outreach will be held on December 12th:

Working group chairs will facilitate these calls and give a brief overview of our work. **Other working group members are invited to join too if you can! This is an opportunity to discuss our work with callers on three conference calls on December 12th.**

- First Call: 10:00am San Francisco; 11:00am Boulder; 1:00pm New York; 2:00pm Halifax; 6:00pm London; 7:00pm Koln
- Second Call: 4:00 pm San Francisco; 5:00pm Boulder; 7:00pm New York; 8:00pm Halifax

Implementation planning - where we are vs. the other 7 working groups

Three of the other working groups (Governance, Economics, and Membership) are very focused on pre-Congress communications and have not proposed an implementation plan at all. They have very specific policies that they are hoping will be accepted at the Congress.

Leadership succession, outreach, and diversity and accessibility are in similar places to us. They have recommendations or papers outlining their work. Outreach has a big binder of external communications materials to give out. These 3 groups are considering what implementation suggestions we could provide to centers. So far, they have the idea to offer a menu of implementation suggestions to help Shambhala centers. This menu could include a facilitated process (like the one Community Care developed), or a less formal process of town hall meetings and action steps. It might also suggest that centers identify a key point person for each of the Shambhala Congress working group topics. We have also discussed that if President Reoch requested that centers hand in a simple implementation plan to him (i.e. what are the action steps they will take based on the information

provided at the Congress) this might be a motivator for Centers to organize and do something post Congress.

Responses to Jane's e-mail requesting Community Care resources

Amy read the summary of responses that Jane sent her. She will email this to the CC working group.

Discussion of what more (if anything) we need to accomplish before the Shambhala Congress in February 13-17, 2005

We decided to add the Q&A on Delegs (between David Quinn and Jane) to the resource webpage. Someone always asks about Delegs when the issue of community care arises. We could create a part of the resource website where people can share what has and has not worked in their own deleg system. Questions could be provided to guide a discussion on delegs. For example: What is your experience with the Deleg system? What worked? What did not work? What are suggestions you have based on your experience?

Amy shared that President Reoch asked her about experts on alcohol abuse in the sangha. We thought that David Whitehorn might have expertise in this area. *Amy will follow up with him. Judith will send Amy information on Sarpashyana.*

Some working group chairs want to have "booths" at the Congress to help them pass out materials and answer questions. If Community Care has a booth, those of us going to the Congress could take turns womaning/manning it. We could share some of the resources that we have gathered including samples of books and handouts. We could encourage leaders to choose a person at their center to work on community care or identify contacts at their center for each of the Community care topics.

One sangha member's e-mail questions and our responses

1. What is the "community" about which we are speaking? Is it the sangha, defined by some kind of membership, refuge, or Shamhala Training experience? Is it broader, including anyone who has a connection or interest in the center?
2. If the latter, is simple interest (out of who-knows-what motivation) in learning meditation enough to form a cultural bond that sustains community?
3. If our community is defined based on some shared sense of warriorship, shouldn't it be open to our engage in some way the many people and groups outside our sangha who manifest that?
4. Are we assuming that since there is so much talk about the need for community in general, that the community quality itself will be a binding factor, equal to or more so that the teachings (therefore it doesn't matter who is included.)

Our discussion: Community is a mandala which includes everyone from the very center where you have teachers, administrators and those who are very involved in sangha activity and also includes people on the perimeter who may be new or simply not as involved. Community could include the people who are in the communities where we live or even broader to the community of all beings. The definition or understanding of community shifts depending upon the situation. For example, a Deleg is one smaller community in our community. There are parents which make up another community. The community is self-defined based on their interest or binding factor. The binding factor is the reason why people keep relating to one another. So that factor could be art or meditation or another common interest.

The felt sense of community comes from people's activities with one another, not from becoming a "member". Community cannot be bought or sold as a commodity. One has to participate and care enough to foster bonds to the community. Community is built through common interest and activity. Community is not a solid thing. It is *like* a living organism, *a constantly shifting web of relationships.*

We aren't here to compel others to be part of our community. It's a self compelling situation for those who are naturally interested in what we have to offer. For students who were accustomed to things being a certain way when the Vidyadhara was living, there may not be the same interest as there was then. This can be sad and lonely. There can be an intense loneliness and sense of longing for the way it used to be.

This is a natural process of the organization maturing. Also, many of these older students are now in positions of leadership that can feel quite isolated. Or they may be actually using the teachings to work in the larger community of the world which doesn't have the same feeling of intimacy as the sangha does.

Jay shared that when Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche came to Sonoma, he observed that most of the work being done by the Shambhala centers is not being done by people who knew the Vidyadhara.

5. In my experience (long), the delek system largely has not worked. Why? Are there assumptions behind it that we are continuing to hold unexamined?

This question has been addressed and continues to be addressed in our work.

6. Like many older students, I've drifted away from the center and the organization, not due to rejecting anything, but because there is little compelling there for me. In terms of offering what I've learned, I also find more engaging venues elsewhere than the proscribed bounds of the formal teaching situations. Perhaps I should try to be more helpful (staff various programs, etc.) but I really don't find the time or passion. There are many people like me; I don't think it's a problem but a reflection of one of the things to consider about community. Our identity as practitioners is old hat, our devotion has many ways to express itself, and there needs to be a grander vision to galvanize us.

Amy said that for older students in the Bay Area, it has been helpful and magnetizing to have teachers come teach on more advanced topics for sadhakas etc. Older students' needs could be better accommodated in some ways by trying to offer advanced teachings

We ended the discussion by agreeing that there is nothing to solve here. The situation is a natural evolution that happens when one Sakyong dies and a new one comes in. We cannot recreate what we had with Trungpa Rinpoche. It is a lonely situation. There is no way around it. We are stuck with ourselves. Now it's up to us. We feel most fulfilled when we can give rather than take. In the old days, there was a lot of taking and the Vidyadhara did a lot of giving. Now we can actually step forward and offer what we have in a genuine way.

We appreciated how much this particular sangha member who is asking the questions has given to our community. He has helped to develop the Shambhala institute, attracting people from all over the world, and introducing them to sitting meditation as well as other warrior disciplines.

This was an inspiring conversation yet again. We agreed that in our work, we should encourage the community to lean into hard discussions like this one and like Group 13 at the Congress. We'll become closer and grow this way. We are providing information on talking circles. Encourage people to develop a capacity to have deep conversations as a practice. We can be honest with one another about how we think and feel and be willing to disclose it. There is nothing to lose. The only way to do it is to just do it.

The next call is scheduled on Tuesday, December 21st at 7:00 p.m. Eastern time.