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*Just as the soft rains fill the streams
pour into rivers and
join together in the oceans
so may the power of every moment of your goodness
flow forth to awaken and heal all beings, those here now, those
gone before, those yet to come*

*By the power of every moment of your goodness
may your heart's wishes be soon fulfilled
as completely shining as the bright full moon
as magically as by a wish-fulfilling gem
May all dangers be averted and all disease be gone
May no obstacle come across your way
May you enjoy fulfillment and long life*

*For all in whose heart dwells respect, who follow the wisdom and
compassion of the Way
may your life prosper in the four blessings
of old age, beauty, happiness and strength*

The Stepping Stone Sangha has now launched

The Stepping Stone Sangha (SSS) serves as an introduction to the Whole Life Program, Metta's longer term Relational Dhamma Distance Learning Program.

The SSS is self-paced, on-line learning with guidance from a Metta mentor. It includes fourteen contemplations covering the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. SSS participants will practice Insight Dialogue in groups and with mentors, learning to see how the relational Dhamma presents endless opportunities for insight and awareness in our everyday lives.

Through Stepping Stone practice, those new to the online offerings at Metta will acquire a background in relational dhamma and Insight Dialog practice prior to joining the mature sangha of the WLP.

Because of the self-paced nature and mentoring format of this program, SSS is open for registration at any time after September 6, 2011. If there's someone in your life who's been inspired by your practice, and has expressed interest in joining WLP, this is the program for them. See **Metta's website** for more information.

The new Whole Life Program

Metta's Whole Life Program (WLP) starts again, and it's been re-envisioned with more flexibility at a lower cost, with more teachers and more cohort times offered. Students are welcome to attend more than one cohort a week, and can choose those that best fit their schedules. The subject this time around: The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination.

There is no end date to the WLP program anymore, and new students will be joining in after completing the Stepping Stone Sangha training.

No matter how long you've been away, if you're a former WLP student, you're most welcome to return.

As before, the format includes weekly ID cohorts, audio talks, written contemplations and in-life practice exercises. Plans are to include regular interview and whole community gatherings. The weekly ID cohorts will be led by Gary Steinburg, Mary Burns and Bart Van Melik, while Gregory Kramer will remain the guiding teacher of teachers for the WLP.

In an effort to open the program to more people, the fee for WLP has been reduced to \$50/month, with a suggested minimum three month long commitment. It is hoped that the lower fee will help cultivate the practice of dana in supporting program teachers. There are also work scholarship opportunities. See **Metta's website** for more information

Experiences in the Whole Life Program

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When first introduced to Insight Dialogue in 1996, there was immediate recognition of the impact the practice had on interpersonal relationship. The sensation of spaciousness and allowing in the midst of what would seem to be chaos was tangible.

The Whole Life Program is a practical and inclusive practice, rooted in the Dhamma, which provides an opportunity to explore the teachings in community. Relating according to Insight Dialogue guidelines brings a unique quality of mindfulness to what we contemplate together.

The Whole Life Program has been a way of applying the teachings to our whole lives and the choices we make, moment by moment. I am continually inspired to rise to the call in support of the programs offered here, for in the shared experience, there is joy to be known in the giving, receiving and collaborating.

Anita BV

A three-part inquiry into the Path: Introduction and Part 1

by Gregory Kramer

Introduction:

The path I speak of conforms to three principles:

Every moment is the path.
Proto-Buddhist teachings are the basis.
The entire teachings are always available.

Each of these principles has an associated question that can be profitably asked at any time:

Every moment is the path has as its question:
Which way am I walking right now?

Proto-Buddhist teachings are the basis has as its question:

How are essential teachings presenting now?

The Entire teachings are always available has as its question:

Where is the taste of wisdom and love right now?

Helpful observations arise from each principle and question.

Part I: Every Moment is the Path

In a full spectrum path, no footstep, no encounter, is left out.

If every moment is the path, this means nothing is left out. From this we understand that the path is unfolding when we are with others just as it is when we are alone. The path includes formal practices and precepts as well as informal or even casual thoughts and actions.

It applies whether we are living a lay life, are on retreat, or have chosen monasticism. This is the

four-quadrant model I've talked about many times, stated in a way that I hope feels real and relevant. Do we actually engage each moment with this attitude? What qualities of the Metta community that we're building will support us in remembering to do so?

Saying one is always on the path means simply that each moment conditions the next. "Which way are you walking now?" asks, "What is the very next step, the one for which one is currently lifting the foot?"

This is the elemental matter of intention. Is the mind inclined toward accumulation or relinquishment, toward selfishness or compassion? All thoughts and actions flow from this basic orientation of the mind.

In the next newsletter we'll present Part II: Proto-Buddhist Teachings are the Basis



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I was attracted to WLP because I wanted to apply Buddhist principles in my everyday life, and because of the possibility of working with a group of like-minded people.

I became close to my practice group, which met regularly by telephone, and because the WLP sangha was so international, I learned how Buddhism affected the lives of people in other cultures. The practice helped keep me centered during stressful times and offered relief from the busyness of personal life.

Mary Ann Demaree

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Upcoming retreats - 2011

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'Insight Dialogue and the power and challenge of meditating together' with Gregory Kramer
Place: London
Dates: September 24-25

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'The Four Noble Truths come home' with Gregory Kramer
Place: Gaia House
Dates: September 28-October 4

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'Compassionate Presence: Relational meditation for psychotherapists and health care professionals' with Gregory Kramer, Sharon Beckman-Brindley and Phyllis Hicks
Place: St. Arborgaste Center, Austria
Dates: October 16-23

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'Living the Noble Eightfold Path' Insight dialogue retreat towards community focused practice
Place: Havalte, Holland
Dates: October 7-14

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'Insight Dialogue, deepening interpersonal practice', a retreat for experienced mindfulness meditators
Place: Monteortone, Padova, Italy
Dates: October 28-November 1

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'Zeal and Relinquishment' an Insight Dialogue Retreat with Gregory Kramer
Place, Barre, Mass
Dates: November 4-15

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'Cultivating a Joyful Heart' with Sharon Beckman-Brindley and Phyllis Hicks
Place: Charlottesville, VA
Date: January 14, 2012

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'Open Heart, True Wakefulness: Insight Dialogue and Human Relationship' with Mary Burns and Sharon Beckman-Brinkley
Place: Tairua, Coromandel Peninsula (North Island, New Zealand)
Dates: February 11-18, 2012

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(2012 retreats continue in the next column...)

Introducing Rachel Hien



Rachel Hien joined Metta as Operations Manager in May of this year to strengthen and expand Metta Programs. At Metta she provides leadership and strategic management services.

In addition to a long-term interest in interpersonal healing and spiritual studies, Rachel has twelve years of experience in organizational leadership guidance and program management support with service-oriented organizations such as the US Peace Corps, March of Dimes and Mercy Corps. Her experience is multi-faceted and includes community engagement, grassroots development, social entrepreneurship and the development and implementation of programs in health and wellness.

Rachel earned a Master of Arts in Sustainable Development from the School for International Training in Vermont and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from the University of Washington. She's traveled widely, living in many places throughout the world, including six years in West Africa. Rachel sees working with Metta as a delightful opportunity to merge her professional competencies and personal practice. A warm welcome to Metta, Rachel.

'Second Annual Cascadia Insight Dialogue retreat'

Place: Samish Camp, Bow, WA outside of Bellingham between Vancouver and Seattle.
Dates: May 24 - June 1, 2012

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'Insight Dialogue and Metta: Opening to Life As It Is' with Phyllis Hicks and Sharon Beckman-Brindley
Place: Southern Dharma Retreat Center, Hot Springs, NC
Dates: July 6-11, 2012