

Milarepa Buddhist Center of Iowa
Annual Report
March 2020 - March 2021

On March 13, 2020 we closed our doors due to the pandemic. But in the last year, thanks to the spiritual, community, and financial support of many people we have been able to survive and even thrive as a community. We thank each of our members from the bottom of our hearts for supporting the community during this difficult year.

These sangha members deserve special thanks this year:

Gabriela Tobias initiated online programs for weekly mindfulness practice as well as a month long Mindfulness Marathon offered in Spanish and English.

Tim Mullaney continues to be a wonderful teacher and spiritual leader for our sangha. He has been there for us since our beginning in 2016.

Joey Braverman has been offering ESL lessons each week via Zoom to Khenpo Thupsang.

Catherine Deming led introductory sessions at 9:30 on Sunday mornings throughout the winter.

Cheryl Ridgeway has been collecting donations made by mail and depositing them each month.

All of the members of our Board of Directors – David Klemm, Gabriela Tobias, Naomi Bloom, Catherine Deming and Ellen Marie Lauricella – work really hard to establish and maintain the teachings and practices of the Dharma in Iowa City.

Sustaining our programming over Zoom

After closing our doors, we began holding teachings and meditation on Zoom. Through Zoom we have continued to reach many people locally, nationally and even internationally. Some highlights of what we have been able to offer on Zoom:

- We have maintained our Sunday morning practices throughout the past year.
- We currently offer 3 mindfulness meditation sessions each week. Two of these are led by Gabriela and one is led by Khenpo Thupsang.

- In June, 2020 we offered a book discussion on The Practice of Lojong by Traleg Rinpoche - led by Tim Mullaney.
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- In the month of January, 2021 Gabriela led a Meditation Marathon which enabled people to meditate together seven nights a week for the entire month.
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- We have offered Parnashavari meditation practice and now Achi Chokyi Drolma practice which attracts people from all over the world.
- We offered *Daughters of the Buddha Have No Fear Discussion* with Khenmo Drolma.
- In January and February, 2021 we offered a book discussion on The Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness.
- In March we began offering a class on the 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva led by Khenpo Thupsang.

Collaboration with Drikung Kagyu Dharma Circle of Madison

Over the course of the last two months, our sangha has been forming a close relationship with the Linda Wuestenberg and Drikung Kagyu Dharma Circle in Madison, Wisconsin. DK Dharma Circle is the sangha that has been charged with supporting Khenchen Konchok Gyaltshen Rinpoche in his retirement. Khenchen Rinpoche is one of the most prominent and wonderful scholars in our lineage. He is the founder of many of the Drikung Kagyu centers in the US and is the translator for a majority of our sacred sadhanas. Twenty five years ago Khenchen started a small publishing company called Vajra Publications. Now Vajra Publications has also been moved to Madison and is under the care of Linda and the DK Dharma Circle sangha. As it turns out, Khenchen's retirement has been very busy. Since the DK Dharma circle is quite small, Ellen Marie has been volunteering her time to help them get a website, mailing list and other elements needed to support Khenchen's growing online teaching. This has created the beginning of what we hope will be a strong relationship between our two centers. Some highlights of what we have been doing with Dk Dharma Circle include:

- Created a website and Mail Chimp platform for DK Dharma Circle
- Assisted with establishing international Zoom meetings on Wednesdays and Saturdays which reach over 100 people each session, including people from the Milarepa Buddhist Center of Iowa sangha.
- We are now offering conjoint teaching and meditation sessions via Zoom. On Mondays we are able to join the DK Dharma Circle of Madison with their Meditation and Dharma Discussion. On Thursdays the DK Dharma Circle joins us for Achi Chokyi Drolma practice.

Garchen Rinpoche asked us to invite Khenpo Konchok Thupsang as resident lama.

In January Khenpo Samdup, who is the resident lama of the Gar Drolma center in Dayton, contacted us to ask if we as a sangha would consider having a resident lama, named Khenpo Konchok Thupsang, in Iowa City. Khenpo Samdup arranged a meeting for us with Garchen Rinpoche and Rinpoche told us that he had faith in Khenpo Thupsang and that Rinpoche would very much like Khenpo to come to Iowa City to be our resident lama. Over the last two months our Board of Directors has worked hard to make negotiations and arrangements for Khenpo Thupsang to come here. Khenpo Thupsang will arrive in Iowa City in September. Some highlights of what we have been doing to prepare for Khenpo Thupsang include:

- We created a contract for Khenpo which he has agreed to.
- We created a 3-year plan for Khenpo which he has agreed to. *Please see attached.*
- We have been in constant contact with Khenpo to answer questions and become acquainted with one another.
- Our sangha member, Joey Braverman, has begun offering Khenpo ESL lessons.

501(c)3 paperwork submitted to law firm

On January 29, 2021 we submitted our documentation to a group of attorneys called Charitable Allies in order for them to finalize our 501(c)3 paperwork. Our attorney is working on this filing the submission.

- Our attorney says that we should expect to receive our 501(c)3 status within 6 months after he finishes the submission.

Current Membership and Donations

We are pleased to report that in the last year we have maintained our membership program even during this difficult time. Here is a summary of our current financial situation:

- We currently have 24 members.
- Our 24 members make offerings equalling \$962 a month.

A THREE-YEAR PLAN FOR KHENPO THUPSANG AT MILAREPA BUDDHIST CENTER OF IOWA

Year 1

- Learning English
- Getting to know the sangha
- Learning American culture
- Creating teaching and meditation programs in collaboration with the Board
- Engaging in his own study, contemplation and meditation
- The Board teaches Khenpo about the spiritual direction of an American center.

Year 2

- Learning English
- Learning American culture
- Creating teaching and meditation programs in collaboration with the Board
- Learning how to represent the Milarepa Buddhist Center at interfaith events
- Learning how to perform duties of pastoral care for sick, dying or poor
- Engaging in his own study, contemplation and meditation
- The Board and Khenpo work together in the spiritual direction of the center.

Year 3

- Learning English
- Taking the lead in creating teaching and meditation programs
- Able to represent the Milarepa Buddhist Center at interfaith events
- Able to perform duties of pastoral care for sick, dying or poor
- Engaging in his own study, contemplation and meditation
- The Board moves into a more administrative and supervisory role while Khenpo takes the lead in the spiritual direction of the Dharma Center.