

# GRASSROOTS DHAMMA



Summer 2021

## *TCVC Virtual Annual Meeting*

**Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>**

**10 am – 11:30 am**

Please join us on zoom and get to know us and what it takes to organize and facilitate our retreats.



## **SUMMER VIRTUAL RETREAT JUNE 10-13, 2021**

**With Steve Armstrong and Kamala Masters**

### **Awareness with Kindness and Equanimity**

Awareness becomes even more powerful and protective when the qualities of kindness and equanimity are also present.

During this time when the world is going through tumultuous and tragic conditions, we will deepen and strengthen these practices. That will help us have more clarity and peace within ourselves, in order to face with wisdom what the reality is in the world.

**Teacher Biographies and Online Registration are available at**

**[WWW.TCVC.INFO](http://WWW.TCVC.INFO)**

Dear Friends,

In these difficult times, we are grateful for the commitment, contribution, and participation of our TCVC sangha that made our winter online retreat possible and successful. The right effort that brings us together in community to listen to the wisdom of our teachers and reflect deeply informs our planning for this year's summer retreat. In order to ensure the health of all, we will host the retreat online once again. You can register for the retreat on our website at [TCVC.info](http://TCVC.info) or return your registration by mail.

We would like to offer another virtual opportunity to meet with us and encourage you to join us for our annual meeting on Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Even though we can't share a brunch potluck together, we welcome and appreciate your interest

in TCVC. An invitation with a zoom link for the meeting will be emailed to our current list. Please contact us at [info@tcvc.info](mailto:info@tcvc.info) if you wish to be added to our email list.

When in person retreats can resume safely, we will be hosting TCVC retreats at Saint Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wisconsin, about a three hour drive from Minneapolis. The change was necessitated by the uncertain availability of Koinonia in the future. Board members visited the center before the pandemic and concluded that it will meet our needs: the large campus and buildings are well maintained; meeting rooms are spacious with room for indoor walking meditation; all guests are housed in single rooms; and the food is well prepared and, in the summer, fresh from their garden. Retreat fees will increase by 10 percent to facilitate the change in location.

TCVC depends on the generosity of our community members to sustain our ability to organize and facilitate affordable residential retreats. We rely on the energy and expertise of many people, and we greatly appreciate their contributions. Presently, we need to update our website, so if you are familiar with Wordpress or willing to learn, please consider volunteering with us. Wishing everyone well, TCVC Board

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*TCVC is a community of people interested in developing and deepening their meditation practice. We provide opportunities to hear and practice the teachings of vipassana (insight) and metta (lovingkindness) meditation, with an emphasis on residential retreats led by senior teachers in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.*

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## The Preciousness of Human Life by Kamala Masters

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As a human being, we have the greatest potential of all creatures on earth to realize the Dhamma, the true nature of reality; to experience an ineffable, unconditional peace; and to discover a way of living that is in harmony with the profound truths of life. But, according to the Buddha, our human birth is very rare. There is a classic story about this rarity in the Pali Canon, the ancient text recording his teachings:

The Buddha was speaking to a group of monks. He said, *“Monks, suppose that this great earth were totally covered with water and a man were to toss a yoke with a single hole into the water. A wind from the West would push it East; a wind from the East would push it West; a wind from the North would push it South; a wind from the South would push it North. And suppose a blind sea turtle were there. It would come to the surface only once every 100 years. Now what do you suppose the chances would be that a blind turtle, coming once to the surface every 100 years, would stick his neck into the yoke with a single hole?”*

And the monks answered, *“It would be very unusual, Sir, that a blind turtle coming to the surface once every hundred years would stick his neck into the yoke.”* And the Buddha replied, *“And just so, it is very, very rare that one attains the human state.”*

That is the example the Buddha gave of how rare the chances are and how precious it is to be born as a human being. If this is so—and even if it isn’t—I ask myself this question: Am I taking care to live my life in a way that honors this precious human birth and makes the best use of it? Now that I am getting older and hearing of so many friends with health issues, and also remembering the many who have passed away, this question comes to mind frequently. In the past few years, it has stimulated greater renunciation and resolve in my own heart and mind. For this reason, each year I take some time for personal retreat. In January of 2011, I went to Lumbini, Nepal, the birthplace of the Buddha, to a retreat center that is an extension of Sayadaw U Pandita’s monastery in Burma. As many of you know, being on retreat is not always a pleasant and serene experience. A lot of it is experiencing the dross of one’s life—the boring and sometimes painful thought patterns that repeatedly appear, the painful physical sensations of the body, the mental and emotional realms that can be hard to bear—along with all the valleys and plateaus of retreat. It’s just how it is. Of course, there are all the serene experiences and deepening understanding as well.

Generally, when I’m on retreat, I don’t read anything, not even Dhamma material. But because I wanted to frequently remind myself of the preciousness of this human life so that I wouldn’t practice casually, I brought along some written encouragement that I want to share with you. One was by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and it added tremendous value to my daily practice:

*“Ask yourself how many of the billions of the inhabitants of the planet have any idea of how rare it is to have been born as a human being. How many of those who understand the rarity of human birth ever think of even using that chance to practice the Dharma? How many of those who think of practice actually do practice? How many of those who start really continue? How many of those who practice continue and attain ultimate realization? Indeed those who attain ultimate realization compared to those who do not are as few as the stars you can see at daybreak. As long as you fail to recognize the true value of human existence, you will just fritter your life away in futile activity and distraction. When life comes all too soon to its inevitable end, you will not have achieved anything worthwhile at all. But once you really see the unique opportunity that human life can bring, you will definitely direct all your energy into reaping its true worth.”*

In addition, the following words of the Buddha have often inspired me to continue expanding the heart in compassion, and developing the mind to open more deeply to liberating wisdom: *“Neither mother nor father, nor any other relative can do as much good as your own well-directed mind.”*

To develop a well-directed mind requires the commitment of repeated intention and steadfast resolve to incline the mind towards what is wholesome and beneficial for oneself and others. It also requires the wisdom of renunciation to relinquish what is unwholesome and unbeneficial. Of course, this requires the clarity and honesty of awareness and an investment in gentle, persevering effort. With practice, we develop these invaluable inner qualities. When we do this, we see how mindful awareness of unwholesome habit patterns actually weakens them. We also see how mindful awareness of wholesome patterns of the mind strengthens them. With these resources, we will be inspired to continue our practice, even in the face of challenging conditions.

By developing the determination to continue in spite of seemingly overwhelming obstacles, we strengthen our faith in our ability to navigate the terrain of our lives with greater ease. And in time, we experience how our well-directed mind towards what is beneficial and wise arises spontaneously.

Life comes to its inevitable end all too soon. The activities of a lifetime are just like raindrops falling on a pool of water: they make a few ripples and then disappear. At the end of our lives, are we going to wonder: “Did I have the courage to do more than just what came easily? Have I truly taken advantage of this precious human birth to cultivate wisdom and compassion, and to live in a way that is increasingly more free of greed, hatred and delusion? Did I have the courage to use this precious human birth to fully realize the Dhamma?” Once we realize the unique opportunity that being born human offers, we will surely want to direct all our energy toward fulfilling our highest potential as a human being.

## Registration for June 10-13 With Steve Armstrong and Kamala Masters

**Register online at [WWW.TCVC.INFO](http://WWW.TCVC.INFO) or mail your registration to Todd Stitt,  
4532 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue S., Minneapolis, MN 55406**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

☐ This is my first retreat

☐ Enclosed is a scholarship request for \$\_\_\_\_\_ Maximum scholarship is \$25

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Retreat Fee\*      Base Fee ☐ \$50      Round up for BIPOC Retreat ☐ \$100

*If you round up, \$50 is tax-deductible*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Optional tax-deductible donation to TCVC Retreat Fund ☐ Scholarship Fund ☐

BIPOC Retreat Fund ☐

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed (Make check payable to TCVC)

\*The teachers that we ask to lead our retreats do not request or receive any compensation from us for their teaching. At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to practice *dana* (generosity) by offering a donation to the teachers.

**Vipassana (insight) meditation** is a simple and direct practice: the moment-to-moment investigation of the mind/body process through calm, open and precise awareness. Learning to observe experience from a place of spacious stillness enables one to relate to life with a balance of wisdom and compassion.

Held in noble silence, the retreat includes sitting and walking meditation, instructions, Dharma talks, and large group question and answer sessions with the teachers.

**As the teachings of the Buddha** are considered priceless, they have traditionally been offered freely. The teachers do not receive payment from TCVC for teaching.

At the end of the retreat, students are encouraged to offer a donation to the teachers to support their living expenses so they may continue to practice and teach.

**To apply for a scholarship**, include a letter with your registration giving the background of your need. Scholarship requests are limited to one retreat per person per calendar year. Those who wish may help others by donating to the TCVC Scholarship Fund, Retreat Fund or BIPOC Retreat Fund.

## Accommodations

Most people will be participating from home. If you are interested in doing a retreat in solitude, there are many individual retreat cabins available in Minnesota.

## Retreat Schedule

The Zoom links and retreat schedule will be emailed to you before the retreat. The retreat opens on Thursday, June 10 with an orientation at 6:30 pm, and the retreat ends on Sunday, June 13 at 8:30 pm.

To support your independent practice the teachers will offer three daily Zoom sessions: morning instructions, late afternoon Dharma talk, and early evening Metta sit.

**Meals** Try to anticipate what you'll need ahead of time to avoid having to go out during the retreat. This applies not only to food, but also medications and other daily things that you need.

**Registration** Send a check for the full amount to secure your registration. If you are applying for a scholarship, subtract the scholarship amount requested from the registration fee.

You will receive an acknowledgement of registration by email. Shortly thereafter, you will receive a confirmation of your status for the retreat (registration or wait list). Approximately two weeks before the retreat, you will receive an email giving you more information about the retreat.

**If you have any questions or special needs, please email the registrar, Todd Stitt, at [retreats@tcvc.info](mailto:retreats@tcvc.info) or call/text 651-500-1469.**

**Cancellations** Please notify the registrar as soon as possible if you need to cancel. Participation in this retreat is limited; your cancellation may open the retreat for someone on the waiting list. Retreat fees are not refundable.

## Treasurer's Report 2020

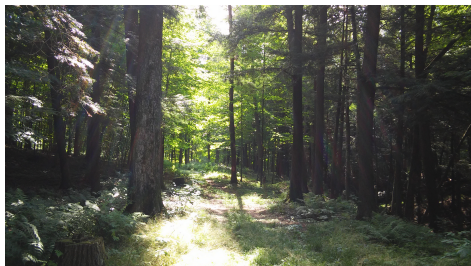
Retreat Fund	7,616
Retreat Deposits	700
Scholarship Fund	2,744
BIPOC Fund	<u>1,126</u>
Balance	12,186

*Thanks to everyone who has donated to TCVC. With your support, many people have been able to undertake intensive retreat practice here in the Midwest. . If you feel inspired by the Buddha's teachings on Dana and the retreats offered by TCVC, please consider making a donation at [www.TCVC.INFO](http://www.TCVC.INFO) or mailing a check to P.O. Box 14683, Minneapolis, MN 55414*

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TCVC retreats are appropriate for both beginning and experienced meditators. We are committed to cultivating a retreat environment that is welcoming to people of diverse identities, including those of all races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, abilities and ages. It is our aim that all may feel safe and respected on their TCVC retreat.

### TCVC CALENDAR

*In person retreats will be held at  
St. Anthony Spirituality Center  
in Marathon, Wi.*

<https://sarcenter.com>

### Contact Us

[retreats@tcvc.info](mailto:retreats@tcvc.info)

Dates	Teachers
TCVC Annual Meeting May 15, 2021 on zoom	
June 10-13, 2021 Online Retreat (3 full days) <i>Registration opens 4/17/21</i>	Steve Armstrong & Kamala Masters
February 18-25, 2022	Chas DiCapua & Rebecca Bradshaw
May 25-30, 2022 Contact Zenzele Isoke at <a href="mailto:zenzeleisoke@gmail.com">zenzeleisoke@gmail.com</a>	BIPOC Retreat with Amana Bembry Johnson
June 10-18, 2022	Kamala Masters
February 17-24, 2023	Chas DiCapua & Rebecca Bradshaw
June 16-24, 2023	Kamala Masters