

ONE BREATH — A Dharma Exchange

A PUBLICATION FOR THE INMATES, VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS OF BUDDHIST PATHWAYS PRISON PROJECT, INC.

WINTER - SPRING 2013

Reflections from inmate sangha members

As men are transferred to other prisons due to realignment, they are writing to BP3 (Buddhist Pathways Prison Project) and letting us know how they are faring in their new locations. In most instances, they are now enjoying much more “physical” freedom. For many, mental freedom started emerging quite awhile ago. Here are portions of a few letters, reprinted with permission.

From Joel: “I miss all of you at BP3. I have been welcomed into a sangha here and the chapel is awesome. There is a sense of well-being by just entering it. There are rugs, cushions and chairs for people who need them. I am on the waiting list to take part in the prison hospice program. I am also taking part in the Braille project. I think about all of you a lot at CSP-SAC. I owe you all so much. I bow in prostration to all of you.”

From Tree: “I have been introduced to a Buddhist practitioner, but I have yet to have a class or meeting with the group. Words can never express my gratitude and joy for the many gifts I have been given, simply by connecting with you all! I am reading *“The Tree of Enlightenment”* by Petter Della Santina and there is a passage that states that there are two types of understanding. First one we acquire by ourselves and

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ATTENDING BUDDHIST SERVICES

Buddhist Services and meditation instruction are open to all inmates regardless of religious affiliation, or no religious beliefs. If the institution where you are housed does not offer Buddhist services, contact the Community Partner Manager. You have the right to request Buddhist services. Please make a formal request to the CPM and then contact us to let us know. Thank you.

Sangha News

CSP-Folsom Womens Facility

A new womens’ facility will be opened adjacent to Folsom State Prison Spring 2013. Women will be transferred from the two womens’ prisons in Chowchilla, which are being converted into male institutions. BP3 was invited to start programming at the new womens facility as soon as the transfer is completed. We anticipate providing a yoga program as well as mindfulness training and meditation instruction.

CSP-SACRAMENTO

A daytime yoga and meditation program was requested by staff at CSP-SAC. Four members of a local Sacramento yoga studio as well as two trained meditation teachers are the primary instructors. Along with yoga and meditation, a mutual sharing discussion is part of each class.

The C yard sangha which had been meeting on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month for the past 7 years, will begin meeting weekly in the evenings beginning March 2013. We finally have enough volunteers to support this request which has been a topic of discussion for many years.

CSP-SCC

Men at Tulomne Yard at SCC have requested, and received programming on the 2nd and 4th Thursday evening of each month. Mindful movement, meditation instruction and community building dialogue are all part of the program. Sangha members from a local Modesto Buddhist group provide the majority of volunteer effort.

CSP-MCSP

Buddhist services will now be available at both A and C yards at Mule Creek. Services have been available at A yard for the past three years. A request by an inmate who was part of the A yard sangha, and transferred to C yard was the impetus behind the new service.

“I miss all of you
at BP3 ... I am on
the waiting list to
take part in the
prison hospice
program.”

- Joel

Retreat Updates

A retreat in prison is a special event. Facilitated by a teacher (or teachers), it is a day of silence. Inmates are often surprised about what comes up in the mind when there are no distractions such as TVs, music and conversation. Participants take a vow of silence for the day, which includes not making eye contact with each other. Retreats feature movement meditation (yoga or qigong), sitting meditation, eating meditation and dharma talks by the teacher(s). Being in silence and observing very intimately how the mind works is a rare opportunity, both in prison and the free world.

CSP- SCC - December 14, 2012

Buddhist nuns Ayya (“Sister” in Pali) Anandabodhi and Ayya Santacitta spent the day from 9am to 3:30pm with 9 men and 5 volunteers at the main yard at SCC.

The day started with the Ayyas offering the refuges and precepts in Pali, since the men were acquainted with this tradition. We then had a short period of qigong, followed by a sitting with guided instructions by the Ayyas. We went around the circle with each person introducing themselves and saying a little about what they were having difficulty with or what they might like to have covered in the daylong. One man said he was struggling with controlling his thoughts, another asked about help with anxiety. Another man wanted to change who he was. Someone else asked about how the Eightfold path applies to daily life. Some expressed their gratitude at having the daylong. By the time we had gone around the circle and shared our concerns, and the nuns had answered a few questions, it was already time for the nuns to have their meal. Therevada nuns eat one main meal a day, and according to tradition, it must be eaten before noon. They only

eat what is “freely given.”

Since SCC prison administrators did not approve our request for a healthy vegetarian meal for each participant, each of us brought in extra food to offer to the nuns for their meal. The men practiced mindful eating which is the practice of eating slowly, enjoying the taste and texture of each food item.

After lunch, there was a period of walking meditation, followed by another qigong session. The nuns offered a Dharma talk on impermanence and how our grasping mind causes the suffering in our lives. If we pay attention, we notice that our desires can never be satisfied. The nuns told the story of Angulimala, the mass murderer who lived during the Buddha’s time, yet achieved enlightenment in his lifetime. The nuns offered protection cords and a small image of Mahapajapati that the men could use on a personal altar. Mahapajapati is the historic Buddha’s mother and was the first woman to become a nun. The men were very happy to receive the cords. The nuns explained that the cords were not magical, but were a method of reminding us of the precepts and thereby keeping us from acting unwholesomely.

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the second comes from others. What I learned finally, is that I can now love myself and I can love others without attachment but with a bigger wholeness. I am learning it is okay to stumble and be mindful of my mistakes. I have made the commitment to meditate at least 3 x per week and study at least 2 x per week. I love and miss all of you.”

From Mike some reflections: “There is no one that arises independently. All phenomena arise dependently. Don’t set yourself aside. All is one and one is none. Events arise one after another in order, perfectly and dependently.”

Buddhist Pathways Prison Project, Inc is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to bring Buddhist mindfulness practice into Northern California prisons. Communities are located at CSP- Folsom, CSP - SAC, CSP- Mule Creek, CSP- Sierra Conservation Center and CSP - Deuel Vocational Institute. The inmates in these institutions have an interest in Buddhist tradition which includes meditation and discussion of the Buddha’s teachings. The Buddha is the historical teacher, Dharma is the truth that he taught; and Sangha is the community. The volunteers and inmates meet on a regular basis to practice sitting and movement meditation and to discuss life experiences from a Buddhist perspective. People of all faiths, or no spiritual tradition are welcome to our services.

Please visit our website for more information.

We welcome donations for books, supplies as well as vegetarian food and teacher “dana” for daylong retreats. You can donate at www.buddhistpathways.org

You can write to us at
Buddhist Pathways Prison Project, Inc.
PO Box 19375
Sacramento, CA 95819

SERVICE SCHEDULE

CSP - DEUEL VOCATIONAL INSTITUTE

A yard gym, 6:00 - 8:30pm 1st and 3rd Thursday

CSP - FOLSOM

Greystone Chapel, 6:30 - 8pm - every Tuesday evenings

CSP - FOLSOM WOMENS FACILITY

TBD

CSP - MULE CREEK

A yard chapel, 9:00 - 11:30am 1st and 3rd Fridays

C yard chapel, 9:00 - 11:30am 2nd and 4th Fridays

CSP - SACRAMENTO

B yard chapel, 5:30 - 7:30pm - 1st/3rd Tues & 2nd/4th Fridays

C yard chapel, 5:45 - 7:45pm - every Tuesday

C yard chapel, 11:15am - 1:15pm yoga/meditation every Thursday

CSP - SIERRA CONSERVATION CENTER

Main Yard, Catholic Chapel, 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, 7 - 8:40pm

Tuolomne Yard, 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 6 - 8pm