

# **Desert Creek House as a community**

The early Christians used to live in communities; they met for prayer, shared what they owned and felt responsible for one another. In the Buddhist tradition the Sangha is formed by the people who practise together and follow the same teacher. Members of a community can live together under the same roof, or meet regularly for times of practice and sharing.

Desert Creek House can be a place for community. What do we wish to share together? How could it be done? This is the purpose of this paper to propose a few possible orientations to be discussed.

Let's start from the two following statements:

- 1) As a community we can meet regularly in order to pray and to share what is essential in our search for truth. We feel then more responsible for each other and will better support one another.
- 2) The whole is more than the sum of the parts. Community is the body which makes our spiritual link visible.

I see a few possibilities for the community of DCH to take shape. They are the following:

## **1) Regular meetings**

If we do not live together under the same roof, regular and frequent meetings are necessary: for prayer, for sharing, for work. The regular attendance at the meetings seems to be a necessary commitment if we want to create a solid link.

## **2) A common rule**

It is a help for each of us to know that the other members walk the same path. We can adopt a common rule, in the way spiritual orders do. For instance we could adopt the rule of St Benedict. Or we can write our own rule which could be very simple. It could be just a few words such as: regular daily meditation, simplicity, hospitality, harmony with nature, or anything similar. Each word can be defined by a few sentences to make the commitment more precise. Such a rule would help all of us to concentrate our efforts on the same challenges in our lives. In this way we can also better share our experience. The commitment supports the effort.

## **3) Commitments**

Another form could be a list of commitments. This is similar to the rule, with the difference that we can choose short term or long term commitments. We can choose the same commitments for all of us or on the contrary we can express individually our own personal commitments in a way which is more related with personal options, precise personal contexts, challenges or attitudes. The list of commitments can also be a combination of common and personal ones. We can regularly meet and share how we progress. In this way we support each other in our respective efforts.

#### **4) Sharing**

Regular times of sharing can help us see how we manage our commitments. The content of this time of sharing can also be independent of the rule or the commitments: what did I struggle with during the last week? What did I discover? Each of us can express in turn what was important for him or her; in this case all other members listen to him or her. Or it can be a common sharing where we all equally take part. To make these times of sharing effective it is important that all attend the meetings regularly.

#### **7) Shared ownership**

We can also choose to share some material goods or parts of ownership (a list of items) such as a car, tools, books, etc. Or create a common fund for given purposes (training, travel, support of other projects) which could be used by one of us in turn. The more radical the solidarity is, the steeper the learning curve in sharing.

#### **6) Staying at DCH**

It is also possible that members spend regularly some time (a few days or more) at DCH. We can in this way have regular daily prayer and meals together, and some times of work too. This would allow knowing each other better than only through times of prayer and sharing. Which form for improving this quality of being together, so that it is more than just social time?

#### **7) Working bees**

Regularly for a day, if possible also overnight. Common prayer (meditation) + meals.

#### **8) Program of activities at DCH**

We can all be also co-organisers of the program of activities at DCH. What do we intend to organise for next year (2015)? Who is interested in taking part in the organisation? Whom could we invite to lead a retreat, workshop or seminar?

It would be good also to have a few people deciding together what the priorities are for DCH; what has to be done, changed, planned. Who does what? How to finance what?

All these proposals need your support and ideas how to implement them. And your participation to make them real.