

## Letter from CIMC's Sangha Life Committee:

# Upcoming Sangha Circle Meetings

CIMC's Sangha Life Committee (SLC) is very excited to offer the first of a series of *Sangha Circle Meetings* for the CIMC community. As you read this, you might ask, "What is the Sangha Life Committee?" We are a CIMC Board Committee with representatives from each of CIMC's Community Groups (35&Under, Elders, LGBTIQ, Little Buddhas, People of Color, White Awake), Members-at-Large and the Board of Directors. Our mission is to attend to matters that sustain and care for all members of CIMC's Sangha and support the flourishing of a diverse and inclusive dharma center. We engage in this work on behalf of the entire community.

Our vision is to create more spaces and avenues for relationship building and communication across the different identity groups and individuals that gather at CIMC. We aspire to create opportunities for sangha members to listen and relate to one another, and through this emergent process, realize the mutual and interconnected nature of our personal and collective liberation. In addition, as our community comes to a greater understanding of its shared concerns (particularly ones that have been left on the margins), members can become active participants with teachers, staff, and leadership in guiding the growth and development of the Center.

With the decision to extend the closure of CIMC's building, we believe it is essential for CIMC practitioners to have periodic opportunities to connect meaningfully with one another across groups, to build community, and to speak directly to CIMC leadership about their experiences at the Center and aspirations as multiple pandemics intensify.

The first of the series of CIMC Sangha Circle (SC) meetings will be held on Zoom to allow CIMC practitioners to connect, learn from and be nourished by the beauty and challenge of being in community. It will include spaces for CIMC yogis to connect with each other in multiracial, intergenerational and gender-diverse breakout groups.

In designing this first meeting, our desire is to minimize, to the best of our planning ability, the arising of unintended harm, and to affirm the voices of those with marginalized racial identities. In this spirit we will invite people who identify as Persons of Color and people who identify as white to convene in separate preparatory meetings several weeks before our first Sangha Circle meeting. These meetings will allow each group to discuss their individual concerns and observations, process their racialized emotional reactions, and develop community guidelines to support connection among practitioners during our Sangha Circle. Because these preparatory meetings will include skill-building and provide a container of care and support for participants, we strongly encourage attending one of these preparatory meetings before attending the Sangha Circle.

In collaboration with CIMC Teachers and staff, the SLC will assemble a team of facilitators for these preparatory meetings and for the Sangha Circle meeting. SC meetings will be offered at least two additional times, enabling a wide group of community members to attend.

Bringing this offering to our CIMC community has been a creative and inspired coming together of many individuals in the service of love and the aspiration of a thriving and welcoming Center. It will take all of us to bring that aspiration to fruition. We invite you to join us in making it possible. We anticipate beginning in February 2021. Stay tuned! We will keep you posted on the progress of our planning.

### Members of the Sangha Life Committee:

- Jim Austin (Little Buddhas Sangha)
- Betty Burkes (CIMC Board of Directors)
- Melanie Cherng (35&Under Sangha)
- Terry Clewley (CIMC Board of Directors)
- Stephen Gutz (Member-at-Large)
- Kathy Holmes (Elders Sangha)
- Emily Fox-Kales (CIMC Board of Directors)
- Sue Kangiser (LGBTIQ Sangha)
- Roberval Oliveira (People of Color Sangha)
- Ben Pittman-Polletta (White Awake Sangha)
- Michele Saunders (Member-at-Large)
- Sharon Bueno Washington (CIMC Board of Directors)