

UPDATE ON THE NUNS INITIATIVE

2021 RETREAT SCHEDULING

As I work on retreat scheduling for 2021, I've already confirmed dates with Ayya Santussika, Ayya Santacitta, Ayya Cittananda, Willa Thaniya Reid and Elizabeth Day, and am in discussion with Amma Thanasanti to find dates that would work for her. I have invitations out to Ayya Canda Bhikkhuni (an Australian bhikkhuni who is working to start a nunnery in England) and also to Ven Analayo Bhikkhu, to see if he would lead a retreat as a fundraiser for the Nuns Fund.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Since its inception in late May, the Nuns Fund has received a total of \$19,307 from 64+ donors. The balance as of this writing is \$11,466. Way to go, my friends!!

The goals for this first year were modest, and we've easily met them! My intention was to raise enough to be able to supplement the teacher dana for each of the four current or former nuns that came to teach this year; to offset any shortfall from the all-dana retreat with the bhikkhunis; and to donate to various bhikkhuni nunneries and projects globally in order to spread our support far and wide.

We had plenty of funds to be able to offer each of the four teachers an additional \$2000 above and beyond the yogi dana that was offered. We ended up with a shortfall of about \$900 for the all-dana retreat that we were able to cover easily. As Kathina approaches in late October, the traditional time of offering to monastics, we'll have the chance to donate to various nuns' projects internationally.

I will likely do another round of fundraising for the Nuns Initiative in early fall, so that our Fund is flush and we can help nuns far and wide.

LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN

A plan arose during Ayya Santacitta's, Ayya Santussika's and Ayya Cittananda's June retreat to engage in a letter-writing campaign to various bhikkhus. This has been a developing project, as we have worked to ground the energy of activism solidly in our Dhamma practice.

Part of the intention of this campaign is to express our gratitude and appreciation to those monks who have acted in ways that are genuinely supportive of the growing bhikkhuni sangha. A number of bhikkhus have been truly helpful in a variety of ways: by acting as confirming Sangha during bhikkhuni ordinations; by doing scholarly work to support the legitimacy of bhikkhuni ordination; or by offering teachings to the bhikkhunis in accord with their vinaya-delineated duties as monks. Expressing our gratitude is a wholesome act in and of itself. Also, we don't really know what kind of consequences they face from their bhikkhu brothers for so publicly sharing their support for bhikkhunis. Our expressions of gratitude and joy have the potential to be very sustaining to their hearts.

The other part of the campaign is to write letters of encouragement to bhikkhus who do not (yet) support or see bhikkhuni ordination as legitimate. These will be trickier. We see around us every day the challenge of sharing differing and even opposing views in a wholesome way. Our hope is to be able to express ourselves in the most loving way possible.

We've developed template letters for both parts of the campaign and an overview with guidelines for how to go about participating. In just going about developing the materials (which was done with input from several bhikkhunis), it has been a fantastic teaching. It can be very tricky to keep a peaceful and open heart when activist

energies heat up the heart and mind. But we're hopeful that we might help to change the minds of bhikkhus about supporting the bhikkhunis if we go about this in a good way.

As a supporter of the Nuns Initiative, you'll be included when the letter-writing materials are sent out. Please don't take it as a pressure to participate if you're not already inclined to do so. You can simply take it as an opportunity to stay in the loop as to what different kinds of activities are being inspired by the Nuns Initiative.

VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED:

There are a few areas in which some volunteer energy would be appreciated. One is that we'd like to be able to create a website for the Nuns Initiative separate from Cloud Mountain's. We'd also like to establish a list serve to facilitate communications. If anyone reading this has those kinds of tech skills and would like to offer some help, that would be wonderful!

On behalf of our friends at the Alliance for Bhikkhunis, I'd like to announce that they have several positions on their Board of Directors that are either already open or about to open up (including one position open because its former holder has recently ordained – great reason!). Long distance participation is very workable.

Another email about the letter-writing campaign will follow shortly, along with the materials you'll need to participate in it!

Yours in the Dhamma,
Laura Hauer
Executive Director
Cloud Mountain Retreat Center