



CHICAGO BUDDHIST MEDITATION GROUP

2020 Annual Report

Dear CBMG Sangha and Friends,

As 2020 draws to a close, we would like to share with you Chicago Buddhist Meditation Group (CBMG)'s activities this past year, and to express our gratitude to those who have contributed in various ways.

The year began with our move into a new rental space, at the beautiful and zen-like [Kiku Matsu Aikido Dojo](#). We are thankful to the Dojo for sharing their space with us once a week at a very reasonable rental cost, and providing us with different opportunities to promote CBMG.

Then came March, and the global pandemic. For the safety of our members and the community at-large, and to do our part in "flattening the curve," we made a quick decision to switch to meeting online instead, and have been doing so ever since. Despite our original concern with the online format, it turned out that going virtual has allowed us to expand our reach – nationwide! We now have practitioners joining regularly not only from *Chicago* but also from *California, Central Kentucky, far corners of Illinois*, and, at times, *Connecticut, Oregon*, and other states. When we eventually return to in-person meetings, we plan to still offer an online option, so that members near and far can continue to join us!



Sitting meditation at Kiku Matsu Aikido Dojo.



In response to COVID-19, CBMG quickly switched to meeting online.



This has been a trying year for everyone. The pandemic, police brutality, economic turmoil, natural disasters, the election, and more – further exposing the deep divide, and the racial and economic inequity and injustice, in our society. Many are experiencing not only physical fatigue or financial stress, but also mental and emotional anguish, with deep, underlying unease, grief, and a sense of helplessness. Now, more than ever, Dharma practice and study, and a supportive community, are needed. We are grateful to everyone who has attended our weekly practice, and those who have supported us in other ways, so that we may continue to offer this space for all who find it helpful.

To ensure everyone feels welcome and safe in our space, we have also enacted a simple but hopefully clear set of Code of Conduct – we invite you to review that at:

<https://chicagomeditation.org/COC>

Our Dharma Study and Volunteers:

As a Sangha that is, by design, not tied to any specific lineage, we have been able to study authentic Buddhist teachings from diverse traditions, hearing lectures from many teachers in Chan/Zen, Tibetan, and Theravada traditions. We also encourage diverse voices from within our Sangha, and are thankful to the following members who volunteered to present Dharma Sharing, facilitate Teachers' Corner, and/or tell Dharma Stories from sutras and koans this past year: *Alan, Belinda, Gloria, Kayla, Kimberly, Margaret, Phyllis, Pon, Stephen, and Trina!*



A Dharma Sharing session led by a volunteer member.



Learning about Koan before sharing a few of them.

With these volunteers' help, in 2020, not only did we study key Buddhist concepts such as impermanence, dependent origination, and Bodhisattvas, we also investigated a wide range of other Dharma topics, including:

Timely lessons for challenging times:

- how to allow joy into our hearts,
- how to be compassionate and kind to ourselves and others,
- strengthening our faith and perseverance,
- overcoming the Five Hindrances, and
- how to skillfully deal with anger or guilt.

Timeless, practical teachings from the Buddha:

- transforming suffering,
- exerting the right effort and conducting right speech,
- practicing with the Five Mindfulness Trainings,
- cultivating gratitude and generosity,
- how to be truly present and to listen deeply,
- using vows to help us in our practice,
- how to practice with attachment,
- how to let go of "the second arrow," and more.



Teachers' Corner: Lama Tsultrim Allione & Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo.



Dharma Sharing on Compassion.



Dharma talk by Guo Gu.



Dharma Sharing on The 5 Mindfulness Trainings.



What Our Members Say:

"Having found this sangha was like discovering a safe place—a refuge—not to hide from the world, but rather to reconnect with my true purpose so I may get back out there with more clarity. I learn many valuable life lessons from the people in this community during the Dharma Sharing. Our conversations help me to see life with renewed optimism and to regard people with rekindled compassion."



~ Pon Angara, Chicago, Illinois

"I'm so grateful for the Chicago Buddhist Meditation Group. Belinda and Phyllis bring a calming presence that settles me right when the session begins. The combination of self-massage, sitting, and moving is different from other meditation groups and I find it very effective for relaxing my mind and body. Thank you for offering this online session every week -- I really value it."



~ Jill Franklin, Evanston, Illinois

"I am still very new in my studies but am happy to have found this community. Thank you, and all of you, for your selfless work for this group. What you do makes a difference in many lives and, by extension, the world."



~ Dave Anderson, Central Kentucky

"Thank you so much for all that you do. This sangha is one of my favorite spaces to learn and connect with people. Having a great community to practice with has been life-changing. I love this sangha so much!"



~ Kimberly Phan, Garden Grove, California

"I find this sangha to be one of the most interesting I have ever encountered. We listen to various Buddhist teachers, explore many different Buddhist concepts, even read Buddhist stories! We learn to appreciate how an understanding of Buddhism enriches our lives. I find this sangha to be enriching and rewarding. This is a wonderful place to practice!"



~ Alan Hester, Oak Park, Illinois

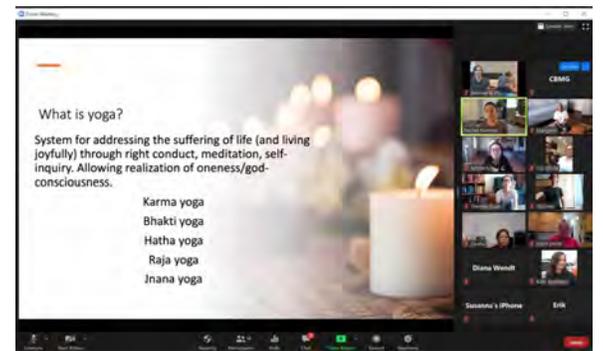
Special Programs

We try to balance study with some fun and socializing too! This year, we held a few special programs, including watching Buddhist movies followed by discussions, a Halloween Special on reviewing the Six Realms of Existence and hearing some scary ghost stories, a Thanksgiving Special of guided gratitude meditation, as well as inviting a guest teacher to teach yoga to our members from a traditional, spiritual yogic lineage that tied in nicely with our meditation practice.

In addition, partnering with [Ancient Dragon Zen Gate \(ADZG\)](#), our members folded cranes ("tsuru" in Japanese), a symbol for peace, to support [Tsuru for Solidarity](#), a nonviolent, direct action project, which demands humane treatment of immigrants and inmates. CBMG members folded a total of 100 cranes, made into two banners, for this effort! A crane banner dedication ceremony was held at ADZG on October 16, and banners will be "deployed" in Tsuru for Solidarity actions in support of freedom and justice.



Guest teacher Tulasi demonstrating a basic yoga pose.



Guest teacher Tulasi delivering a lesson on yoga practice.



Crane banners with prayer tags for the Tsuru for Solidarity project.



Halloween Special: ghost stories told by Ven. Ajahn Brahm.



Our Financials

As of November 30, 2020, we have total cash assets of \$3,243.19. We anticipate our annual (January to December) expenditure in 2020 to be a total of around \$2,100, which includes rent, Meetup subscription, insurance, governmental filing fees, Dana (giving/generosity) for the visiting yoga teacher, and various supplies. Our anticipated total income for 2020 is around \$3,200.

In 2021, we expect some increases to our annual expenditure due to inflation, fee or premium increases, as well as purchasing of conferencing equipment (estimated \$200-\$300) to enable simultaneous online participation once we return to in-person meetings. We may also incur additional special program expenses should we manage to invite guest teachers again.

CBMG, a 100% volunteer-run nonprofit, is sustained financially by donations alone. Thank you to all of our donors who have contributed!

If your situation allows, we invite you to support us by making a one-time or recurring donation on [our website](#) or our [Facebook page](#); or email us to find out how to donate with a check. CBMG is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity – all donations are deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

In addition, we are now registered on Amazon Smile! If you make purchases there, please consider selecting **Chicago Buddhist Meditation Group** as your charity of choice on [Amazon Smile](#), and a portion of your purchase price will be donated to CBMG.



Many Ways to Donate:



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Looking Forward

In 2021, in addition to our regular programs, we will also look for opportunities to invite guest teachers and perhaps even hold another special panel event like we did in 2019, depending on resources available.

Our vow and hope is to continue offering this space for Dharma learning and practice for as long as members need it, enough volunteers to help out, and adequate finances to sustain it. As causes and conditions change, we will strive to adapt. We aspire for this Sangha and for us all to act as a Bodhisattva would – responding to needs in skillful ways, supporting each other with kindness, and doing so without ego or clinging to any fixed form.

In Closing

We would like to share with you the following excerpt from *Samyutta Nikāya 45*, and wish you all, our Good Friends, Good Companions, and Good Comrades, peace and ease in body and mind – thank you for being part of each other's "entire holy life."

Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he paid homage to the Blessed One, sat down to one side, and said to him:

"Venerable sir, this is half of the holy life, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship."

"Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, that is, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path."

SOURCE: <https://suttacentral.net/sn45.2/en/bodhi>. *Samyutta Nikāya 45: "Half The Holy Life"*. Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi.



With bows and gratitude,

CBMG Board Members:

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