



Insight Meditation Community of Western Massachusetts

(formerly known as Insight Pioneer Valley)

Recap of August, October, and December 2021 IWM Town Halls

As part of the Sangha Governance Series

August 25th Town Hall (Excerpt from [September 30, 2021 News from the Board](#))

At our August Town Hall, our working group to explore alternative sangha structures, led by Ruth Folchman (Practice Leader & Kalyana Mitta facilitator) and Lore Detenber (WAD facilitator, Kalyana Mitta facilitator & Beloved Community Builder), shared some of what they have been learning from a diverse group of sanghas whose members and leaders they've been interviewing about governance structures. The purpose of Ruth & Lore's research is to provide enough information for sangha members to begin to imagine new possibilities. In the spirit of co-creating our sangha, the intention for the Town Hall was to inspire us all and to provide a forum for conversation and building a shared vision.

In the research process, Ruth & Lore asked representatives of other sanghas about many aspects of sangha governance. In particular at our Town Hall, they focused on the following questions about building community:

- What have you found to be your most effective initiatives to build & sustain community?
- Are there processes that have supported people's sense of belonging/shared ownership of the Sangha?

Ruth and Lore shared some of the rich responses they received to these questions. They then offered to the 35+ sangha members in attendance the following questions for reflection, which we invite you to consider as well:

- What brings you to our Sangha?
- What do you hope for?

One sangha member wrote to us with their response to these questions, and we wanted to share some of what they wrote: "The presentation about the interviews was illuminating and I agree with others who would like to hear/see more about them. As a relative newcomer, most of my experience has been on Zoom. Looking back, interpersonal connections and personal growth are major motivators that help me feel connected to and

want to support the sangha -- interpersonal connections such as the check-ins/reflections in Aging Mindfully and the small group and dharma buddy time in the WAD group. When I feel personal growth from the sangha offerings (that are led by inspirational, insightful teachers who suggest amazing reference materials), I am grateful and want to be supportive of the sangha. I'm especially interested in connecting with other sangha members in the future around social justice action."

We invite all sangha members to write to us at leadership@insightwma.org with your own response to this question about what brings you to the sangha and what you most hope for. Later this fall, at an upcoming Town Hall (date TBA), Ruth & Lore will present some of what they've learned about how other sanghas organize and hold the role of teachers in their communities.

October 30th Town Hall (Excerpt from [November 18, 2021 News from the Board](#))

The intention of Our Town Hall Governance series is to offer an opportunity for community conversation focused on various dimensions of sangha operations. At our second in the series, in October, Ruth Folchman & Lore Detenber of the Governance Working Group presented some of what they have been learning from other sanghas about organizational structure and decision-making, with a focus on programming, teachers, and other sangha leaders. We learned that there are as many ways to think about leadership and decision-making in a sangha as there are sanghas. We're inspired to continue learning and to contemplate, together with the sangha, what forms will best serve this community. Ruth & Lore have collected information from nine Sanghas around the country, using interviews and website review, focused on Community Building; Structure & Decision-making; Dana; Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging. **For our third Town Hall focused on Governance, on December 12 from 1-3pm, we will hear from Ruth and Lore about how other sanghas approach Dana and fundraising.** Our final Town Hall in this series, in the new year, will take up the theme of Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging.

December 12th Town Hall (Excerpt from [December 20, 2021 News from the Board](#))

Many thanks to everyone who attended our December 12th Town Hall about dana, or generosity, and financial structures. A deep bow of gratitude to [Ruth Folchman](#) and [Lore Detenber](#), who have been co-stewarding this collective process to explore alternative sangha structures.

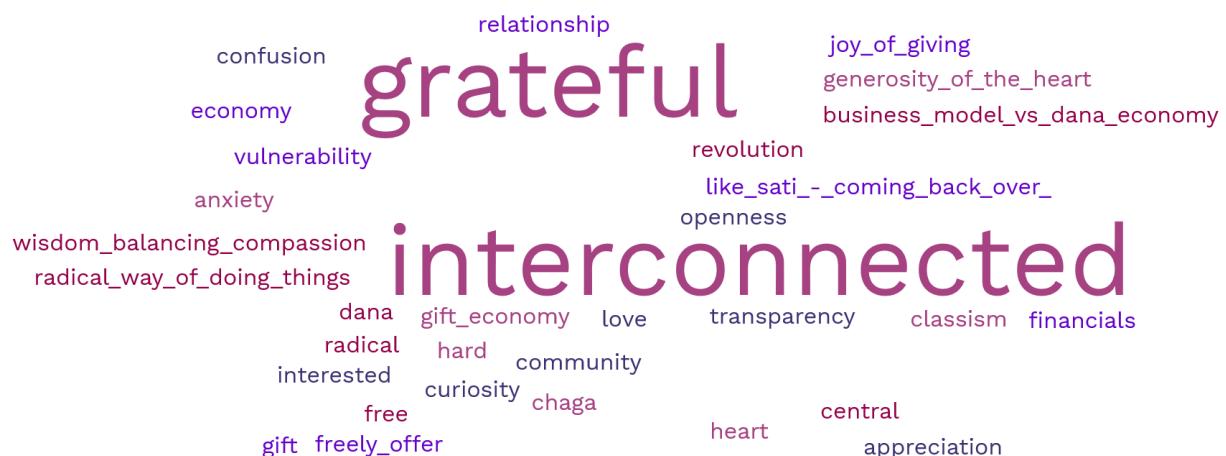
Prior to the Town Hall, Ruth and Lore shared these [quotes and article](#) as a starting point for our conversation about dana.

During the Town Hall, sangha members had a chance to hear from Rick Hart, Cathy Repetti, and Leslie Smith Frank as they shared their perspectives on their dana practice and on the article Ruth and Lore sent out in advance. Our thanks to each of them.

Ruth and Lore shared some inspiring and interesting examples of ways other sanghas communicate about dana (with a focus on financial dana -- not dana related to time). See the [Dana Communication slideshow](#) for more information.

We also had a chance for discussion in small groups. Our thanks to the note takers who submitted their breakout room notes. If you're a note taker who hasn't yet submitted your Town Hall notes, please send them to leadership@insightwma.org.

Sangha members had a chance to reflect and share words that resonated with them following their breakout conversations and the discussion amongst Rick, Cathy, and Leslie. (See the Word Cloud below, which was updated to include words sangha members shared at the very end of the Town Hall. The two large words were mentioned multiple times.)



During the Town Hall, some asked for more information about IWM's finances. In the new year, we'll be sending an update about how we ended 2021, as well as a bigger picture that includes information about our restricted funds (Community Dharma Leaders Fund; BIPOC Fund) and our endowed funds (Teacher Support Fund). In recent months, we have been sharing financial snapshots on a quarterly basis through our newsletters.

- [Sept 30th update](#) (posted in our Oct 28th newsletter)
- [June 30th update](#) (posted in our July 30th newsletter)

(To see other "News from the Board" — click [here](#))

Stay tuned for information about IWM's next Town Hall, which will take place in February 2022, and will be focused on Inclusion and Belonging.