

Insight Meditation Community of Charlotte

Dhamma Leader Training Program (DLTP)

Program Description

IMC Charlotte is offering a two-year program to help participants develop the skills and experience necessary to become a Dharma Leader in our sangha. Dharma Leader responsibilities include teaching classes, multi-week series, study groups, and daylong retreats, as well as participating in the leading of weekly sangha meetings. The DLTP is intended to expand the pool of Dharma Leaders serving IMC Charlotte, and to help ensure the continuity of the teachings available to sangha members for the years and decades to come.

OVERVIEW

- Year-one **monthly sessions**, including eight three-hour Tuesday evening sessions (6:00 to 9:00), and four daylong Saturday sessions (9:00 to 5:00). These sessions will be a combination of instruction, discussion, and formal meditation practice, with some small group discussions. The year-two schedule will include more focused one-on-one mentoring and periodic group meetings; these dates will be established in response to the needs of the group as the program unfolds. Year-one session dates are:
 - May 14, 2019, evening
 - June 18, 2019, evening
 - July 13, 2019, daylong
 - August 13, 2019, evening
 - September 17, 2019, evening
 - October 12, 2019, daylong
 - November 5, 2019, evening
 - December 3, 2019, evening
 - January 11, 2020, daylong
 - February 11, 2020, evening
 - March 24, 2020, evening
 - April 18, 2020, daylong
- Recommended **reading, listening, and reflecting**.
- **Practice teaching**, including developing and delivering Dharma talks and leading meditation sessions.
- Participation in **silent, residential vipassana meditation retreats**, including those offered by IMC Charlotte.
- Ongoing **mentoring** with one or more IMC Charlotte Dharma Leaders.

The DLTP will be composed of three to six participants, and is by application only, due February 1, 2019.

CURRICULUM

Content - Anticipated topics to be covered include:

- Constructing and delivering a Dharma talk
- Providing meditation instructions
- Conducting question-and-answer sessions
- Conducting practice discussion sessions
- Developing a breadth of teaching styles
- Cultural sensitivity/diversity matters
- Dealing with difficult situations
- Co-teaching with other leaders
- Ethics and boundaries
- Dealing with dana
- Importance of sustaining one's practice

Monthly Sessions

The twelve year-one **monthly sessions** are at the core of the DLTP. The eight **evening sessions** will be primarily classroom time, including discussion and opportunities to practice teaching skills, as well as some formal meditation practice, and will be taught by the program's core teachers. The four **daylong sessions** will allow time for additional formal practice, as well as more practice teaching and exploration of topics in small groups. Other IMC Charlotte Dharma Leaders may participate as guest teachers for the daylong sessions.

Reading, Listening, and Reflecting

The primary focus of assigned reading, listening, and reflecting will be in conjunction with preparing and delivering practice teaching assignments, including use of the classical Theravadin texts (suttas). Additional assignments will relate to cultivation of teaching skills.

Practice Teaching

In addition to the cultivation of teaching skills during the year-one sessions, participants will receive more hands-on teaching opportunities in the second year. Training to serve as a Dharma Leader will by its nature involve receiving feedback on one's performance. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback to their fellow participants.

Residential Retreats

Participation in silent, residential insight meditation retreats is essential for anyone aspiring to teach the Dhamma in this tradition. Participants will be expected to attend all residential retreats offered by IMC Charlotte from the date of application through the completion of the program. In addition, participants are expected to participate in non-IMC Charlotte retreats as their schedule and funds allow. Completion of the program will require attending at least one retreat of seven or more nights, either before or during DLTP.

Personal Mentoring

Each participant will be paired with one or more IMC Charlotte Dharma Leaders for mentoring. Mentors draw upon the breadth and depth of their own personal experience, meditation practice, and teaching experiences to guide participants. Participants will connect with their mentors, at a minimum, in monthly face-to-face sessions. This component of the DLTP operates on the dana system, which will be arranged directly between the participant and the mentor.

APPLICATION

Is the DLTP Right for You?

The DLTP is grounded primarily in early Buddhist and Theravadan thought and in vipassana (insight) meditation practice. DLTP is not a Dharma study program; participants will be expected to have an existing demonstrated understanding of the teachings. Completion of IMC Charlotte's Dharma Study and Practice Program (DSPP) or equivalent knowledge will be required. Some other traditions may be referenced, but the DLTP will not satisfy those seeking to teach in other traditions (e.g. Mahayana, Vajrayana and Zen).

The nature of the program will require participants to both evaluate and give feedback to other participants, and to receive feedback from others. In addition, participants can expect to receive periodic evaluations and feedback from the core teaching team. Those not willing to cultivate skill in giving and receiving feedback will not benefit fully from the program.

The mission of the DLTP is to assist practitioners to develop the skills and experience necessary to become Dharma Leaders with IMC Charlotte. It is not the intention of this program to cultivate Dharma leaders for service elsewhere. It is designed to expand the pool of Dharma Leaders serving IMC Charlotte, and to help ensure the continuity of the teachings available to sangha members for the years and decades to come. Upon completion, participants will be expected to commit to service to the sangha.

Eligibility

The DLTP is intended for those with vipassana meditation experience. Applicants should have, cumulatively, a minimum of **three years** of vipassana practice and at least **fifteen nights** of silent, residential vipassana or metta retreat practice. It is important that participants include as a part of their practice the careful examination of and reflection upon the teachings of the Buddha.

Those who do not have fifteen or more nights of vipassana retreats, but who have spent a significant amount of time in study and practice (1) in another Buddhist lineage, or (2) individually are welcome to apply.

Admissions Standards

The strongest applicants will be offered admission to the program. The "strength" of any individual application will be relative to the strength of the others, therefore there is no absolute standard by which one will be guaranteed admission. All factors being equal, there will be a preference to admit those who:

- Are active members of the IMC Charlotte community, including having attended the sangha's classes, series, and retreats,
- Have had more meditation practice, particularly in vipassana, including a well-established home meditation practice,
- Have an established retreat practice of silent, residential retreats in the vipassana tradition, and
- Are likely to function effectively in a consensus-based group of Dharma Leaders.

The application process may involve a personal interview with one or more of the program's core teachers.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Program Cost

The tuition for the DLTP is \$600. This amount has been intentionally kept to a minimum so that for most people finances will not be a barrier to participation. The tuition covers space rental, materials, and other administrative costs.

The teachers, both core teachers and any guest teachers, are offering their services on a dana (donation) basis. These services include planning the program, teaching the monthly sessions, handling administrative details, and serving as mentors (for which dana arrangements are separate from dana for the program). The availability of this program will be sustained by the generosity of each participant.

Payment of the tuition is due with the participant's confirmation of acceptance of the invitation to participate, no later than April 15, 2019. Dana for teachers will be handled at the conclusion of each of the four daylong sessions.

Limited scholarship funds are available to support program participants. All applications will be considered equally, regardless of ability to pay. Upon an offer of admission, applicants will have the opportunity to request scholarship assistance. IMC Charlotte will make reasonable efforts to award the amount requested, but may not be able to fulfill the entire request.

In addition to tuition and dana for teachers, participants may be asked to purchase a limited number of additional books.

Email and Internet Access

The DLTP will communicate administrative details with applicants and participants primarily by email. Homework assignments will include researching topics and listening to or viewing talks online. Participants will need an email address and internet access.

Application

The DLTP is anticipated to include three to six participants and is by application only, due February 1, 2019. Please see the application form for more details.

Commitment

Because of the unique nature of the DLTP, the cohesive community that develops over the course of the program and the limited number of spaces available, we ask that if you are accepted into the program, that you commit yourself fully to the program for the duration, and to all of its components (other than for health or family emergencies). If you have further questions about the DLTP or the application, please contact one of the core teachers:

Clyde Alexander
CAofNC@yahoo.com
704-299-0385

Debbie George
YogaMom14@aol.com
704-763-2193

Ward Simmons
WardSimmons@bellsouth.net
704-995-4860

CORE TEACHERS

Clyde Alexander has been practicing meditation since 1998. He has attended residential retreats at Spirit Rock, Insight Meditation Society, Southern Dharma Retreat Center and Cloud Mountain. He is a graduate of the Dedicated Practitioner Program, Spirit Rock's two-year study program.

Debbie George loves sharing the dharma, the Buddha's non-religious teachings. She experiences the powerful wisdom and practice of insight meditation, the tools that untangle our thinking which is often the creator of our misery. Debbie completed a yearlong study program at Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in 2013. She's been teaching, practicing and studying Buddhist meditation since Summer 2007.

Ward Simmons has been practicing insight meditation since 1999. He regularly participates in residential meditation retreats ranging in length from a week to a month. He has completed the Integrated Study and Practice Program at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, Massachusetts, and the Community Dharma Leader program through Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Marin County, California, and is currently enrolled in Spirit Rock's Advanced Practitioners Program. Ward has found the practice of insight meditation to be life-changing, and he considers it a privilege to share this path with others.