

Bright Way Zen - Three Focus Areas for Strategic Planning

Result of a March 31st 2018 Strategic Planning Meeting with Domyo Burk, Janna Allgood (Chair of the Board of Directors), Zack Bartel, Jim Lewinson, Shoketsu Ellen Carlin, Joan Maurer, Jeff Young, Myoju Bella Jhunhunwalla (as member of Strategic Planning Committee), Frankie Borison (as member of Strategic Planning Committee). At that meeting we adopted the Bright Way Zen Mission and Vision statement, and reviewed the Bright Way Zen Planning Survey sent out in the fall of 2017, which got responses from 40 participating members and asked people about the reasons they attend Bright Way and the things they would like to see at Bright Way in the future.

Strategic Planning Area: SANGHA GROWTH

Allowing the Sangha to grow in terms of numbers of people attending, and number of attendees becoming members. Not aggressively pushing for growth, but accommodating natural growth as a result of being visible and welcoming, and providing ways for newer people to find a place at Bright Way Zen and encouraging them to become members.

Already Being Done:

Member News – Welcoming new members in weekly email and briefly describing why they joined BWZ, writeups on other members, member news.

Guest masters – Volunteers are stationed at the front door to welcome new people on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings. They may also engage them in conversation during tea time and are available to answer any questions.

Advertising through Google Ads – Spend about \$50 a month making sure our website features on searches

Website – Maintain an inviting, informative website

High Priority (Potentially high benefit, at least relative to cost, and/or current members already interested in working on this)

Sandwich board sign – Curbside by entrance to BWZ, in the event the owners don't approve of a larger sign on the building. The sandwich board would be set out before we meet for zazen and be put away after the meeting is over (at night or in the morning).

BWZ Brochure – For people who come to BWZ for the first time, explaining what we offer, different ways to get involved, mentioning membership. (Also helps with building sangha resources by encouraging membership.)

Introduction to Practice at Bright Way Zen Class/Workshop – Taught by senior members and targeted at newer participants or members.

Children's/Family Programs – For example, provide reading and activities for children while parents in the Zendo, or hold a family-friendly event once a month. Several of our members have expressed interest in planning and staffing such programs. (Also helps with increasing member investment.)

Thursday evening practice event – Increases number of people we can serve (survey indicated our current times don't work for everyone) and helps spread attendance out. Shintai is seriously considering starting this in the fall.

Medium priority

Workshops on Zen and/or meditation – Introductory workshops at libraries.

Compile a list of senior members available and willing to do outreach (speak at schools about meditation and Buddhism).

Education with Sangha on issues of privilege, particularly around race, cultural background, class, to make Sangha more inclusive and inviting to all kinds of people.

Low priority

Articles in community newsletters (Cedar Mills, Market of Choice or New Seasons)

Ads in Tricycle and other Buddhist publications

Strategic Planning Area: DEEPENING MEMBER COMMITMENT

Increasing the level of commitment, involvement, and investment of existing Bright Way members. Our Zen center will always welcome anyone to join in our practice regardless of their level of investment in terms of time, participation, commitment, or financial support. At the same time, we believe our Sangha can serve many of the needs of its members, in ways consistent with our mission, and thereby become a cherished and central aspect of their lives.

Already Being Done:

Member's Google Group email list – Allows Sangha members to communicate with each other

Member News – Welcoming new members in weekly email and briefly describing why they joined BWZ, writeups on other members, member news.

Opportunities for informal Sangha interaction – Potlucks, Sangha tea, monthly peer-led reading group.

Opportunities to deepen commitment through vow – Jukai and Lay Discipleship

Opportunities to meet with transmitted Zen teacher(s) in sanzen and practice discussion

Opportunities to volunteer (Board of Directors, event staffing, cleaning, care of altars, timekeeping and presenting, organizing ceremonies, serve on committees)

Volunteer Coordinators – Event staffing and cleaning each have their own volunteer coordinators (other volunteer areas still largely overseen by Domyo)

Teacher’s Advisory Council – Active members who have taken Jukai participate in discussion about care of the Zen center/Sangha as a whole

Sangha Stewardship Committee – Group of senior members committed to planning for and taking care of the health and harmony of the community, particularly: Making Bright Way Zen welcoming and inclusive; fostering connection and a sense of belonging; attending to areas of potential or real disharmony; cultivating clear and compassionate communication.

Membership Steward – Someone assigned to personally welcome new members, contact people who are ill or have been absent, etc. (currently Myoju).

High Priority (Potentially high benefit, at least relative to cost, and/or current members already interested in working on this)

More social events – Engage members and nonmembers in social activities such as movies, sangha nights with games, coffee after Sunday service in order to strengthen the Sangha.

Children’s/Family Programs – For example, provide reading and activities for children while parents in the Zendo, or hold a family-friendly event once a month. Several of our members have expressed interest in planning and staffing such programs. (Also helps with Sangha growth)

Member Directory available online – Members of Bright Way will soon be able to log on to our new membership site and view an always-updated directory of members, including contact info and profile pictures.

Sangha Buddy system – People who have been active members for a year or more offer to be paired up with new members; offer personal connection and take responsibility for keeping track of their buddy(ies).

Thanking people for what they do and volunteer appreciation in weekly newsletter.

Proactive plan for dealing with disharmony in the BWZ community.

Medium priority

Community service project – Sangha as a whole undertakes some kind of ongoing commitment to care or justice in our wider community (e.g. finding a way to provide support for Latino communities in WA county, or addressing local homelessness)

Activism – Finding ways for members to connect around issues they are interested in.

Low priority

Nonviolent communication or right speech classes or other communication.

Strategic Planning Area: BUILDING SANGHA RESOURCES

Gradually building our Sangha's resources in terms of finances, physical environment and material items that support our practice. At this point, explicit fundraising will remain light and relatively low-key, but there are creative ways to get people involved in helping to fulfill the Sangha's vision for the future.

Already Being Done:

Annual campaign letter before the holidays - But set more ambitious goal (\$1,000).

Membership – People are invited and encouraged to become members and pledge some level of financial support.

Call positive attention to membership – E.g. Mention it in weekly newsletter, print nametags for members, make membership a benefit.

High Priority (Potentially high benefit, at least relative to cost, and/or current members already interested in working on this)

BWZ Brochure – For people who come to BWZ for the first time, explaining what we offer, different ways to get involved, mentioning membership. (Also helps with growing the sangha by encouraging people to return.)

Additional positive ways to remind people about/encourage membership.

Annual “Fun” Raiser – Dinner, fun event, associated with relatively light fundraising. One of our members is a blues base player who may provide entertainment at the “fun” raiser.

Silent Auction – In conjunction with “fun”raiser or not. Auction items – such as dinner for six, paintings, metal sculptures, reiki and massage – will be donated by members.

Communicate Vision to Members, Garner Support - Craft communication to our members about the financial resources necessary to support what’s most important to our members, e.g. Domyo and long term stability.

Planned Giving - Set up a clear and inviting avenue for people to explore planned giving to Bright Way Zen (estates, wills).

Low priority (Questionable benefit)

Donation list of specific items needed for the zendo e.g. teas, altar items, office items.