

BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST CENTRE



JUNE 2022 - MAY 2023

Annual. *review*





The Birmingham Buddhist Centre exists to spread the Dharma in the West Midlands. As a spiritual community, we are open to anyone who wishes to find out about Buddhism and Buddhist practices. 25 years ago we moved to our spacious Centre in Park Road, Moseley and it has served, as was intended, as an oasis in the city. Our intention is to continue to create a calm, friendly and inspiring place for as many people as possible. This annual review gives a summary of some of the recent changes, highlights and developments.



Dear friends of the Birmingham Buddhist Centre,

It feels like we have very much emerged from the effects of the pandemic and there is a lot of energy and vibrancy in the classes, groups and events.

We have had one of the busiest years I can remember in terms of interest in the introductory courses, and it's so heartening to witness so many people making the step of becoming mitras and also asking for ordination, all good indications of flourishing Sangha life.

What gives me the greatest satisfaction is that the Centre combines the creativity and inspiration of many Order members, friends and mitras. I worked out that 27 order members and mitras help to teach classes on a regular basis.

Creativity is a theme this year. We had "the Winter of Creativity" where people were encouraged to create art to sell as a contribution to Tiratanaloka's appeal - the retreat centre where women train for ordination. It's currently housed in a building too small for the need.



Then the Centre team's creativity is a thing. It's lovely to see Mike's teaching experience express itself in plans for school visits and Alice's design skills making the Centre's publicity look exciting, interesting and eye-catching.

More details on these developments are outlined in this annual review, and I hope you enjoy reading it.

It just remains for me to wholeheartedly thank you for your help, your participation, your time, your financial support and your well wishing. I feel that very strongly coming from the Sangha.

**MAITRISARA
CHAIR**





As a charity, the trustees are legally tasked with the leadership of the Birmingham Buddhist Centre making sure it has the resources it needs to carry out its purpose; which is to spread the Dharma in Birmingham and enable people to practise together. The trustees make decisions together to ensure the spiritual vitality of the Centre is upheld and ensure that it is run with care and competence.



MAITRISARA (CHAIR)
SHUDDHAKIRTI (TREASURER)
PASANNAMATI (SECRETARY
AND SAFEGUARDING TRUSTEE)
SINGHAMATI
DHARMASHURA
DHARMASHALIN
PRAJNABANDHU



The Centre also has a president who is a friend to the Centre, does not have a management role but has oversight of the Centre and links it via the network of presidents to the other institutions and manifestations of the Triratna Buddhist Community.

Our president is **PARAMARTHA**.

You may contact any one of us to discuss anything about the Buddhist Centre that you want to raise.

The year in numbers

At intro level...

268

different people accessed the introductory courses, with 30 sangha members being involved in the supporting teams

& lots more activity after this:

180

different in-person sessions open for the Sangha post intro, including 8 going deeper courses, 24 Sangha mornings, 5 festival days, 2 sesshins and 48 Sangha Nights

31

people celebrating further commitment to the Buddhist path with 2 ordinations, 8 new people asking for ordination and 21 people becoming Mitras



and there were...

118

attendees on retreat, with 3 weekend retreats and one week long retreat

30

educational visits, 28 being from schools and 2 visits from University level students

8

weekly study groups: 1 new women's group, 1 new men's group and 6 continuing to further years



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CELEBRATING

Ordination expresses a person's deeply held commitment to living their life in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

In September, Abhayadhara went to Spain on his ordination retreat and was ordained by Prajnabandhu and given his order name which means "he who bears in mind the quality of fearlessness". It was a delight to hear about the retreat on his return and since then, Abhayadhara has contributed a great deal to courses and classes.

In May, Danabandhu gave us a very unusual and welcome opportunity. His public ordination ceremony was held at the Birmingham Buddhist Centre. The building was overflowing

with over 100 people and Mahamati, Danabandhu's public preceptor, officiated. His name was explained by his private preceptor Prajnabandhu as "he who is a friend of giving".

Mitra ceremonies too are a way for people to express that they are practising the Buddha's teachings. 21 people took that step this year, 17 in Birmingham and 4 in Warwick. This is the highest number in a single year that we can remember and especially strong numbers for the men.

We are also delighted that six women and two men asked for ordination this year.





"The support I've received since attending the Warwick group and Birmingham Centre has enabled me to glimpse my potential - resulting in my asking for ordination. The support since then has enhanced my practice in ways I couldn't have imagined"

NATALIE

“**COMPASSION IS FAR MORE THAN EMOTION. IT IS SOMETHING THAT SPRINGS UP IN THE EMPTINESS WHEN YOU YOURSELF ARE NOT THERE....”**

Sangharakshita

COMMUNICATING

This year, 268 people learned about Buddhism and tried out meditation in our Introduction to Meditation and Buddhism courses. Bringing back the Thursday evening option has meant that we can run 12 courses per year.

There is a real art to communications within the Sangha and beyond. We want our messages to be clear, engaging, attractive and enticing. You have probably noticed a big improvement in the quality of communication over the year, and that's because Alice loves communicating and designing things with visual impact. In addition to that, Sangharuchi gifted his considerable talents to create two videos for us, one as an introduction to the Centre and one on *dana culture*.

Alice has also got us on Instagram, another way to beautifully present who we are and encourage people curious about us to check out our courses and activities.



find Sangharuchi's beautiful introductory video here, featuring the voices of some of you!





PARTICIPATING

Ten mitras training for ordination led introductory level classes this year co-teaching alongside Order members. Their teaching was of a very high standard and contributed freshness and energy to our courses. They prepared carefully through a series of training sessions that were organised for them.

We have discussion groups in almost every course session where people break off to discuss a theme or question. This is often reported as a highlight of the course and one of the reasons people keep coming as they get to know others. This is only possible because in every course, five friends and mitras volunteer to lead these groups and support the evening. In a very busy environment, this support is invaluable.



DEEPENING

Currently there is no individual with the title of women's mitra convenor, a role we have included in the team for over twenty years. Together, Singhamati, Maitrisara and Sagarasri have taken on a co-ordination role with each person taking part of the journey a woman might travel as she deepens her involvement. Sagarasri organises work with women who have asked for ordination, Singhamati looks after the women mitras and Maitrisara responds to the needs of women before they become mitras.

This is working well especially as we work so effectively together.

One excellent innovation this year has been to pair women who have asked for ordination with an order member "buddy" who can meet with her and help her find what she needs as a next step. Generously sixteen women Order members agreed to take on one or two women to buddy a total of twenty-one mitras. And Sagarasri convenes gatherings for both, separately and together.



LEARNING

The Buddhist Centre in Birmingham has been evolving for over 30 years and a lot of experience has been built up over that time. Each Buddhist Centre has its own particular approach and what works in one city or situation doesn't always work in another. That said, there is huge value in learning from other Centres and the Birmingham Buddhist Centre is part of a network of Centres in Europe called the European Chairs Assembly. For two weeks every year, Maitrisara attends a meeting of this network on behalf of the Centre. We share our own learning in a mutually beneficial exchange which strengthens us all. Recently the European Chairs Assembly has initiated a consultancy service and in that capacity Viryanaga, until recently the Chair of Brixton Sangha, visited the Buddhist Centre at our request earlier this year.

Having a sympathetic and knowledgeable external perspective is very refreshing and energising and Viryanaga left us with a lot of ideas and ways of looking at things we hadn't thought of. The main theme this time was on financial planning. We were delighted by the whole visit and another Triratna charity, Future Dharma Fund, financially supported Viryanaga's visit.



VIRYANAGA



FutureDharmaFund



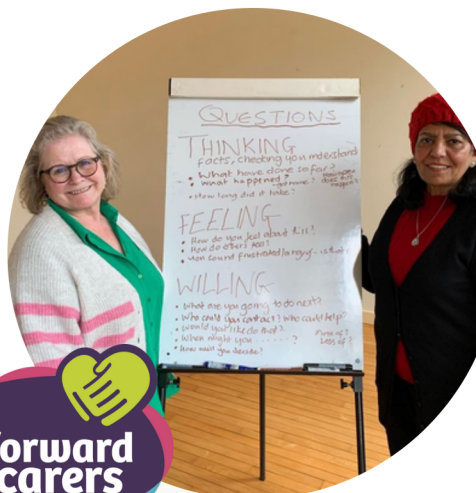
REPLENISHING

The carers project started in 2004 and was funded by Birmingham City Council to provide wellbeing breaks and sessions at the Buddhist Centre to help unpaid carers with their mental and physical health. In March 2022, we had some good news. We have been funded for 5 years (with a possible 2 year extension) to continue to support carers - with overnight, weekend and day long breaks plus weekly yoga, tai chi and a wellbeing-focused peer support group. We also trained six carers to become carer mentors in a specially designed programme covering safeguarding, signposting and mental health first aid.

We work within a partnership of twenty-two charities and services in the city (like MENCAP and Age UK) co-ordinated by Forward Carers, the holder of the contract with Birmingham City Council.

“To be able to feel carefree is like winning the lottery. I really needed this nurturing space”

“Thank you for the gift of being cooked for and cleared up after”





STRENGTHENING

We love our beautiful old building and there are always dozens of jobs that are needed to keep the Centre looking well cared for and in good repair. We could really do with some handy skilled volunteers to help us out on a regular basis.

Some of the jobs we do, take an incredible amount of professional skill and expertise. This year the builders we found to reinforce the staircase were finally available to do the job - so it wouldn't fall down. Phew.

The Centre aims to welcome people from different backgrounds and help everyone feel at home and welcome. As with any established group of people, there are often reasons why people feel that they don't quite belong. And some of those are not conscious or visible to those of us who create the "vibe" of the Centre so we are always aiming to learn more. We are grateful for the kindness, awareness and courage of everyone to take steps to examine their own biases.

"The Birmingham Buddhist Centre is one of the most inclusive and friendliest places I've ever encountered"

**SINEAD - TRANS FEMALE
SANGHA MEMBER**



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Our income was 20% up on the previous year

Class and regular donations accounted for 50% percent of the Centre's income in the year June 22 - May 23. Regular giving is from 110 donors gifting between £5 and £500 per month.

The team has been working hard to keep our expenditure well managed in the face of increasing costs, particularly the energy bills of a large Centre like ours.

Our room hire income took a tumble during the pandemic but with the efforts of Visarada, we rebuilt the intricate pattern of room hire customers many of whom were completely new to us. Mike, who joined us in September 2022, has built on Visarada's work and the Centre is well used in the daytime when the Centre is not being used for Dharma activities.

WHERE DOES YOUR DONATION GO?

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Donations (inc. classes)	88,301	Team	78,303
Retreats	18,490	Retreats	14,794
Room Hire	44,000	Classes and activities	6,398
Shop	10,934	Shop	6,648
Other	5,141	Centre Property	29,238
		Administration	14,212
		Other	6,075
TOTAL INCOME	166,866	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	155,668



Meet the Team

Contact them if you need to:

DHARMASHALIN - MEN'S MITRA CONVENOR - dharmashalin@gmail.com

MIKE - CENTRE MANAGER - info@birminghambuddhistcentre.org.uk

DHARMASHURA - CHARITY DIRECTOR - bbcdharmashura@aol.com

MAITRISARA - CHAIR - maitrisara1@gmail.com

VICKY - MAINTENANCE MANAGER - vicky.beckett.bbc@gmail.com

ALICE - COMMUNICATIONS AND PROJECT MANAGER - alice.evans.bbc@gmail.com

“I really appreciate the work the team does to keep it all going. It’s a very special place held by a very special team”

CLARE - MITRA



**AND WE'D LIKE TO SAY
THANKS TO ALL THE
VOLUNTEERS AND
DONORS FOR
MAKING IT
POSSIBLE**



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- MAY 2023



BIRMINGHAM BUDDHIST CENTRE

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ANNUAL

CONTINUE SUPPORTING US



REVIEW