

Dear friends of the Beatenberg Meditation Center

2020, what a year! The fact that in these turbulent times the celebration of our 20th anniversary had to be postponed remains one detail among many. We sincerely hope that next summer on July 3/4, it will be possible to celebrate the 21st anniversary of our Center together with many friends!

Courses. Unsuspecting and in good spirits, we started the year with a handful of shorter retreats, until in early March our familiar world was abruptly turned upside-down due to the spread of the corona virus. The Center equipped itself with disinfection stations and signs displaying hygienic guidelines, and the house team worked hard to ensure that, despite the virus, we could continue to offer an environment for teaching, silence, and appreciative exchange. But as of mid-March, we too had to bow to prevailing conditions and completely cease running courses in the Center.

We will spare you all the details about the fully booked retreats that had to be cancelled between mid-March and mid-May and mention here the 8-day course with Ajahn Sucitto, who would have honored our center for the second time with his scheduled visit.

It was during this period that the “Zoom” platform began its boom. Thanks to thorough preparation, the first virtual 4-day Easter course with Fred von Allmen, and in part Isis Bianzano, proved a great success. The possibility to practice at home, under expert guidance, in a virtual community was, and is, enormously appreciated and has been successfully offered in further retreats.

With many precautionary measures, meditator numbers reduced by two thirds and a sound safety concept, we were able to partially resume regular retreats at the beginning of June. The board of trustees and house team had elaborately conceived and implemented the concept – a great challenge for everyone! Fortunately, it was actively accepted and supported by meditators who were very disciplined in putting it into practice.

In the meantime, the Center purchased a video camera for live-streaming. The corresponding set-up work was painstakingly prepared, and the synchronization of image and sound continuously tweaked. We are now in the fortunate position to be able to offer presence retreats for a limited number of meditators and at the same time live-streaming for participants at home, so-called “hybrid courses”.

Fortunately, for the two traditional summer course weeks, three of our teachers, Fred von Allmen, Ursula Flückiger and Irene Bumbacher were present. The fourth in the group, Carol Wilson, stuck in California, was able to be “beamed in”. Our first course with Bhikkhu Ana-

layo, who was also unable to attend, was held online and, with the physical presence of Yuka Nakamura as an assistant, was also beamed to the local meditators in the Center hall.

Many of the 2021 program retreats will also be offered via streaming or if necessary, online only. All courses in 2021 are initially planned with a much-reduced number of meditators, depending on the corona situation. In addition to the usual teachers, a CPP (Committed Practitioners Program from Bodhi College) will figure prominently in our program. Furthermore, Leigh Brasington will be teaching a course for the first time and the popular study seminar with Fred von Allmen is also back in the program.

Stephen & Martine Batchelor, world-renowned Dharma teachers and Buddhist authors, have decided now to limit their teaching activities. Stephen, and subsequently also Martine, have been welcome and popular guest teachers at our center since its beginning and even before since 1986, at the time that the Dhamma Group Switzerland was active. As of 2021, they will no longer be teaching at our center.

Since most of our course participants now obtain information via our website, we have reduced our paper program from 32 to 8 pages for 2021. The new brochure contains the most important details and a course program overview to tear out and hang up.

House team. At the end of 2019, Barbara Meyer, who had worked for a while in the area of course management/administration, left the center. She was replaced by Peter Flückiger in April, in the middle of the lockdown. Due to the continuously changing course conditions as well as the introduction of the new registration and accounting system, Dominique Schmuki and Peter Flückiger met many challenges in the office this year. At this point we would like to express our thanks to them both, as well as to our former house team member Margit Tilley. Margit has supported the center office with great commitment, both during the rush of registrations at the beginning of the year, as well as with a great variety of tasks during the closure of the Center, and she continues to do so.

Valentina Glasenapp has been working in the kitchen in place of Beate Plag since February. At the end of 2020, Katrin Auf der Heyde (housekeeping and maintenance) will leave Switzerland and continue her inner and outer journey in fresh pastures. We are happy to announce that Sophie Besset will take up her position on March 1, 2021. We would like to thank both departing house team colleagues for their dedicated service and wish them all the best in their future endeavors. And we look forward to a cordial cooperation with the new team members.

At the end of this eventful house team report, a sad announcement: Philip Scheidegger, member of our very first house team around the turn of the millennium, passed away in October after a short but serious illness. His great devotion to the Dharma practice as well as his countless renovations in the house, which serve us to this day, let us remember him with affection and appreciation.

Administrative system and website. During the year, our outdated and inadequate registration and accounting system was replaced with a completely new, more efficient system, involving a huge amount of effort and expense. In the office, there was first short-time work, and then occasionally overtime. Fortunately, two very generous donors have already given us a significant amount towards covering these costs. At the same time, of course, our web-

site, which is the interface to the registration and accounting system, had to be redesigned (www.karuna.ch).

Finance. During the past two decades, in which the course activity has continuously grown, the board of trustees has always planned and managed the finances extremely prudently. This enabled us to repay the enormous loan sum of well over 1 million CHF in full over the years. At the same time, we were able to carry out major renovations to the 65-year-old building, keep course prices low and offer large price reductions for those on low incomes. Furthermore, we even managed to make substantial provisions, which are now urgently needed in these difficult Corona times, to enable us to keep the six house team members, but also the large building. (Among other things, we are faced with an extensive roof renovation.) Great support and encouragement were provided in the past year by generous donations. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to all those who have supported the Center financially or as volunteer helpers.

As Corona and its related problems are far from over, the Center's financial situation is now getting gradually tighter, and we are even more dependent on the generosity of many benefactors until further notice. The Center can be supported in the form of a one-time donation or through an annual patronage. In addition, participation in online retreats makes a financial contribution to the survival of the Center.

Of course, there is much more that we could say about the current financial situation of the Center and about the use of the funds, but this be beyond the scope of this brief annual report.

Maintenance. The customary maintenance and repair work, as well as unforeseen events, needless to say, take place too in a Corona year. For instance, thanks to Nikolaus Rechberg, it was possible to prevent our storage cellar from being flooded following intense rainstorms. And the current fire alarm system needs to be renewed and a new control unit purchased. At the end of 2019, the tree behind the Kuanyin statue collapsed under the weight of snow, causing the statue to break. She was patched up by Nicholas just in time for her to continue exuding some of her compassion ... when the heater system once again broke down.

And last but not least, an observation from our immediate surroundings. One of our neighbors has built a new cow barn. It is bigger than our center, but only enough for 30 cows. Social distancing rules have applied for quite some time in animal welfare, it appears.

We hope that this report was able to bring you a little closer to our Center, even in these tempestuous times, and we look forward to welcoming one and all to the "blissful mountain" or, if not possible online, in 2021, despite pandemic-related adjustments.

May our efforts benefit all living beings!

For the Center

Catherine Felder

Ursula Flückiger