



Maha Siddha Nyingmapa Center

MSNC Statement of Policies

As of April 24, 2001

The Maha Siddha Nyingmapa Center is a group of students of Dodrup Chen Rinpoche who are dedicated to the propagation of the Longchen Nyingthig tradition of Nyingmapa Buddhism in America. Our principle functions are to sponsor Dodrup Chen Rinpoche's visits to America and to maintain our temple and retreat facilities as a place for blessing, teaching, and practice.

General Principles

Most of the following policies were either set by Dodrupchen Rinpoche himself or derived from his stated preferences. In general, Rinpoche has said that he would like the facilities to be used by his own students who make an on-going commitment to supporting the place by contributions of money and work. While some of Rinpoche's activities such as blessings or empowerments have been open to wider circles as appropriate, Rinpoche likes his teachings and advice on meditation and practice to be limited to his own dedicated students who will follow through on what he says. As such, though some of our events are open to non-members, certain events especially during Rinpoche's visits are only open to members.

Membership Policy

Requirements:

- Members must be accepted as disciples by Dodrup Chen Rinpoche.
- Members must maintain regular dues contributions. This will be elaborated below.
- Though no minimum is set, members are expected to regularly perform service for the center in one form or another. Members should volunteer to be on at least one work committee. Please see the attached description of the committee system.

Benefits:

- Full Members may vote in Board elections and other ballots.
- Membership discounts.
- Unsupervised use of facilities for retreat, etc.
- Permission to stay on Maha Siddha premises overnight.

Details of Dues policy

- Full membership dues are currently set at \$45 per month.
- *Associate Membership:* A provision is made for those who cannot afford the full dues to become 'Associate members'. Associate members may choose a lower rate but not less than

\$30 and they do not have voting privileges. A member may change membership status either to or from Associate Membership at most once per year and must inform the treasurer in writing of the specific date that the status is to change is to take place. Please see the attached explanation of Associate Membership.

- Dues for each month are payable as of the first of that month, although members are encouraged to pay the full year's dues at the beginning of the year.
- Once a member begins paying dues, he/she is expected to continue without interruption.
- Members more than three months in arrears lose their privileges until they become current.
- Members who fall behind in dues must make up past dues in order to maintain membership status. An accumulated back-dues debt may be forgiven one time only during a member's lifetime upon request.
- In negotiating the duties and responsibilities expected of a caretaker, the board may waive the dues requirement during the tenure of the caretaker as an incentive.
- *Work Exchange* - Due to numerous bad experiences in the past, we discourage work exchange in lieu of dues payment. In extreme cases, the board may allow a member to substitute work for dues at a rate of \$5 per hour. As with all members, such work exchange members are still expected to perform additional service to the center in addition to meeting the dues requirement.

Probationary Period:

Privileges begin after a six-month probationary period of paying dues. The purpose of the probationary period is to 1) allow the new member to demonstrate commitment; 2) give the new member a chance to become familiar with the other members and our way of doing things; and 3) to avoid opportunists who wish to only pay dues temporarily in order to use our facilities or participate in member-only events with Rinpoche.

The probationary period also applies to voting privileges for those switching from associate membership to full membership. Regardless of how long a member has been an associate member or whether the member has been a full member in the past, a member who switches from associate membership to full membership will not be allowed to vote until six months after the switch and dutifully paying the full membership rate.

Exception to Probationary Period:

An exception is made in the case of certain new members to allow them to attend Rinpoche's teachings even if they have not been dues-paying members for six months. This is to avoid the dilemma of those new students who do not have another lama and who must wait until Rinpoche arrives to be accepted by him as a student so they do not have to wait until his next visit to receive teachings. In order to qualify for this exception, a new member:

- Must either have been accepted as a disciple by Rinpoche within the past six months or was previously accepted by Rinpoche but only moved to the area and learned of our policy within the past six months.
- Must not be the student of another lama.
- Must become a dues-paying member immediately.
- Must have demonstrated commitment by attending practice sessions and/or making offerings of money, work etc. to the center.

In addition to these requirements, the Board of Directors will use its discretion to decide on such matters. Rinpoche has the final say and can over-rule the board's decision.

Work

There are a number of tasks required to maintain the organization and facilities. We try to do as much as possible with volunteer labor to save cost and also to give a chance for members to accumulate merit. In order to make sure that necessary tasks get done and to coordinate projects, we set up a committee system. Members are expected to volunteer on at least one committee.

The current committees and coordinators are:

- 1) Evaluative Committee: Martha Irwin
- 2) Building Committee: Richard Weiss
- 3) Grounds Committee: Thom Chiofalo
- 4) Gardening Committee: Ann Lachman
- 5) Decorating Committee: Connie Bigony
- 6) Shrine Room: Ken Rocke

Any volunteer work should be discussed with the appropriate coordinator first. Please see the attached description of the committee system for more details.

Proxy Votes

Members with voting privileges who cannot attend a business meeting may vote by proxy either by submitting a statement specifying particular votes to a board member or by appointing another member with voting privileges to vote for them.

Use of Facilities at Kunzang Choling:**General:**

- The facilities are intended for the practice of the Longchen Nyingthig tradition of Nyingmapa. Only Dharmapala practices of the Longchen Nyngingthig are permitted on the premises.
- Some events are open to the interested public although certain teachings and practices will be restricted to members especially during Rinpoche's visits.
- Overnight use of the facilities for personal retreat, attending group practices, camping, or any other reason is limited to members only. Only Rinpoche may make exceptions. (This is Rinpoche's request.)
- No advertisements for other centers or other lamas shall be posted without Dodrup Chen Rinpoche's approval.
- No smoking, drugs or illegal substances of any kind are permitted anywhere on the premises.
- Members and visitors are expected to clean up after themselves.
- Please keep noise to a minimum so as not to disturb our lamas or practitioners who are meditating.

Temple

- Group use of the Temple is by MSNC only.
- Non-members must be accompanied and supervised by a member in the temple.
- No overnight sleeping is permitted in the shrine room.
- Please show respect by not wearing shoes in the altar room or pointing the soles of the feet toward the altar or Lama.
- The upstairs apartment is Rinpoche's quarters and should only be used by Rinpoche or with permission of Rinpoche. Only those who have been invited or are serving (cooking, cleaning, working, etc.) should go upstairs.

- Any overnight stay more than one night in the downstairs should be scheduled with the retreat scheduler. Scheduling a one night stay is optional but in all cases, priority goes to those who have previously signed up.

Retreats Policies

Fees:

Members may stay up to one week without cost. Beyond that, the cost of staying in the cabin is \$40 per week and tenting is \$20 per week. Retreatants should also pay for utilities, phone, firewood, etc., which they use. Full members staying for less than two weeks do not need to pay for utilities.

Retreat Facilities:

Current retreat facilities include the lower cabin, the camper/trailer, and tenting.

- The basement facilities are not intended for long retreats. They may be used for short (less than two weeks) retreats provided that it does not conflict with scheduled group events and there is reason that the other retreat facilities cannot be used. However, this is discouraged.
- The uphill cabin is reserved for the caretaker who may offer it to retreatants but is not obligated to do so.
- In certain circumstances, we may need to host lamas or other guests of Rinpoche. If the caretaker's cabin is needed for this purpose, the caretaker will have first choice of the other facilities. This will take precedence over scheduled retreats.

Scheduling:

- Retreats less than or equal to two weeks, henceforth referred to as short retreats, must be scheduled in advance with the scheduler, currently Richard Weiss (413) 367-2134, and must be specific as to start and end dates and which facilities are to be used. If there is no conflict, the retreat will be scheduled immediately. If there are conflicts, then the scheduler must attempt to arbitrate but priority goes to the first person scheduled for a particular time and facility.

Applications for long retreats, i.e. longer than two weeks, must be made in writing to the secretary, currently, David Dvore, at least two months in advance and must be specific as to start and end dates as well as which facilities are required. Any special arrangements or requirements should be specified. The secretary must then inform the membership of the request. Conflicting requests for use of the facilities and objections and considerations must be reported to a board member. The board will attempt to resolve conflicting requests and will decide within three weeks of the secretary's notice.

Miscellaneous Policies

- No advertisement of MSNC facilities shall be distributed.
- MSNC shall not be represented at any conference or organization of other centers.
- MSNC shall not enter into reciprocal arrangements with other centers.
- All fund-raising activity, letters, etc. directed to the membership, on behalf of the center, or using the center as the receiver of donations must be approved by the board. The board shall prioritize such activities if it is deemed that there is too much competition for donations to allow all activities to proceed at a given time.

Confidentiality of Financial Records

The following policy was adopted at the 2001 Annual Meeting:

- We will never pro-actively distribute donor's names or contributions.
- Any info including all donations and expenses is available to any board member upon request.
- Other members may have access to any information upon request except that information about donors names will only be released on a need-to-know basis as determined by the board.
- No info will be releases to non-members unless required by law.

Explanation of Associate Membership**Basics**

Associate Membership was established to allow discounted dues based on financial hardship without negotiation. Those who cannot afford our full dues rate of \$45 per month may choose to pay what they can afford but not less than \$30 per month. The only thing they must give up in order to take advantage of this is their voting privilege.

The motivation behind this arrangement is twofold: 1) Generosity and 2) Ease of administration.

Generosity

The minimum rate is set well below a fair share of expenses by any accounting. By going the extra mile to allow such underpayment, we hope to eliminate the need for quibbling over details. Since we don't perform any verification of financial hardship, this option can and is used by people who wish to pay less than full dues for other reasons. Some people who feel their dues should be less than the full rate of \$45 because of their low level of participation take advantage of this as well.

Ease of Administration

We have a limited number of volunteer workers. Previous attempts to allow financial hardship discounts required board members to spend hours in negotiation. Moving to an honor system like this relieves the board of this burden. The only time we distinguish between membership classes is when we vote. There is very little bookkeeping involved and no other administrative overhead. No-one needs to be responsible for looking over others' shoulders to make sure they pay for events or use of facilities at various rates depending on class of membership. More complicated systems would add to the work burden of our limited pool of responsible workers.

If you do choose to be an associate member, please consider the above points and choose an appropriate monthly dues rate for your situation.

6) Shrine Room:	Manager- Ken
Decide style	Tankas
Alter	Texts
Ritual Implements	Tapes
Offering materials	Sound system
Post Practice Schedule (David volunteered)	

Managers:

- Organize their committees and keep them functioning
- Responsible for tasks completion
- Creates yearly budget
- Point person to receive problems and suggestions
- Lists work list on Temple `Chore Board' or on the web

Caretakers:

Caretakers follow an existing list of duties plus will stock necessities like paper towels, soap, tea bags. They will deal with trash removal. Keep the First Aid kit updated. Also they will prepare the place for those who will retreat.

All members are requested to participate in one or more of these Committees. Please connect with the managers of the committee`s of your choice as soon as possible to help insure meeting the budget due date.