

GENERAL MEETING

Date: 18th April, 2010

Time: 1pm

Place: Sydney Centre, 10-14 Cooper Street, Surry Hills

Topic: All aspects of our New Premises Building Fund

Agenda:

1. Explanation on a new account set up and held by Mother Center for Sydney Centre, in addition to our existing Sydney Centre New Premises Building Fund.
2. Explanation on future donations, bequests, and funds raised.
3. A presentation of the background history which led to the setting up of our trust deed in 2004.
4. Open forum
 - a. Our own premises – is it time to start putting thought into action?
 - b. If so, what is the right format to get the wheels turning?
 - c. Should we expect more involvement in this project from the trustees of our building fund?
 - d. Should we rotate trustees every 3 years (by election)? (this is a suggestion from Center Department.)
 - e. Should we set up a New Premises committee?
5. Date of a further meeting to vote on any proposals, and elect trustees and any other positions that may arise as a result of this meeting.

Minutes:

Present:

Council members: Cissy Reynolds, Dasha Palmer, Joanne Tedde, Laurie Grant.

Members & visitors: Fay Ramadan, Deborah Harbour, Janusz Darecki, Helen Wren, Gowrie, Jim Allen, Rages Allen, Supriya Singla, Chris Reynolds, Rakesh, Ser, Billy Ryland, Lesley Goldblatt, Sally Cooke, Pamela Ryland, Joanne Tedde, Nanette Chisholm, Gabriele Tedde, Garry Elfes, Marcie Goldie, Ronda Kennedy, Scott Birdsell, Peter Tuminello *(Some names on the attendance sheet were hard to read. We apologise for any inaccuracy or omission)* Total: 28

Apologies:

Vicki and Lou Khoury, Farida Irani, Penny Redfearn, Gary Redfearn, Tim and Joanne Robinson, Yvonne de Haas, Len and Nerina, Veronica Stephenson, Garry Elfes, Terry Catton.

Cissy Reynolds opened the meeting with a prayer and meditation.

1. Explanation of a new account

Cissy introduced the agenda of the meeting and explained a new account set up and held by Mother Centre for Sydney Centre (in addition to our existing Sydney Centre New Premises Building Fund), where the current amount of US \$169 935.50 has been allocated as a gift back to us by Mother

Centre. This was the result of a conditional bequest from Sydney devotee Harry Peck who passed away more than 10 years ago. His bequest to Sydney Centre stipulated that if SRF did not incorporate in Australia within 10 years, the money will go to Mother Centre. This took place last year, and after their own investigation into the matter, Mother Center decided that it was Harry's wish to help Sydney Centre acquire its own premises, and therefore set up a special building fund account within their own system to hold this money for us.

2. Future donations, bequests and funds raised

- a. Cissy outlined 2 choices our devotees have when donating towards our building fund –
 - i. Donate to our existing NPBF which is a local bank account.
 - ii. Send the donation to Mother Center specifying that it is for the Sydney Centre building fund.
- b. Cissy explained the pro's and con's: --
 - i. Donating locally does not incur fees which apply with an overseas transaction, and not be subject to fluctuating exchange rates.
 - ii. Our local account is in the form of a term deposit earning the highest available interest. The account in the US can earn very nominal interest at the best of times.
 - iii. Donors may feel more confident in contributing to money looked after by Mother Center.
 - iv. Having an account with Mother Center gives us the official status that Mother Center officially and actively approves of our endeavours to purchase our own property.
- c. Comment from audience – overseas Australians wishing to help Sydney Centre may find it more convenient to donate to the US account.
- d. Cissy also noted that the Managing Council told Br. Girish that “the gifted money is theirs to use if an urgent need arises at Mother Center”.

3. Background history of our existing trust

Cissy introduced Helen to present the background history which led to the setting up of our trust deed in 2004. She also referred for further details to the Deed of Trust.

Helen explained the following: --

1. The circumstances prior to 2004, which led to a trust being necessary so that those bequeathing would be confident that donated money would be used solely for the purchase of future new premises.
2. Who has managed the trust up till the present and how it has been done.
3. Legal aspects -- who are authorised to sign cheques.
4. Any purchased property would be automatically the possession of Mother Center in LA.
5. The wording of the trust took a lot of time and effort for it to be truly legally binding, as there are major differences between Australian and US laws.

(Please see Appendix 1 for Helen's presentation of the background history.)

4. Open Forum (conducted by Laurie)

(Please see Appendix 2 for full details of presentation by Laurie.)

- a. Laurie started with reflection on Master's teaching and brief meditation.
- b. Question: Our new premises – is it time to start putting thought into action?
- c. Laurie explained the process he had to go through within himself:--
 - i. He put down his thoughts, initial enthusiasm led to reality check after meditating.

- ii. He tried to understand long term implications.
 - iii. He tried to address all potential problems.
 - iv. Then his thinking shifted from problems to solutions and how it can be done.
 - v. He realised that the process should be done consciously with joy.
 - vi. Get ideas, take time to meditate on them, then return to talks.
- d. Comments from the audience –
- Les: The Centre does not have enough money to buy a property. It is a question of fund raising.
- Janusz: Needs to be specific in how much money we need, what we are looking for.
- Scott : (made reference to Perth’s property). To have a vision is important.
- Laurie: Is there the desire to purchase a property?
- Fay: Of course.
- Laurie: (Cited Glendale Temple as an example of unexpected windfall.)
- Deborah: Mentioned high expenses of London Centre as a result of ownership
- Helen: Devotees need to feel relaxed, not pressured, (mentioning general rules of Mother Center - you should have average of 100 different people attending services each week before you should consider buying a property, or you will not have enough human resource.)
- Janusz: Sydney is one of the most expensive cities in the world. Don’t waste time on unrealistic goals. Are we thinking 2-3 millions? Are we allowed to have a loan?
- Ronda: Perth Temple – mixed blessing. High maintenance cost. Small circle of people to take a lot of responsibilities.
- Laurie: What do we look for in our premises? --
- Scott: To spread Master’s teachings; easier access for community; safety
- Janusz: To experience God and manifest love
- Laurie: This is a starting point. If we have desire for property what do we focus on in our team efforts --
- 1) Common vision
 - 2) Trust structure
 - 3) Property finding
 - 4) Fund raising
 - 5) Spiritual aspect, create new premises on causal and astral level first
- Possibly 3 devotees to each of 5 above categories.
- Lesson for life – (reference to wild geese story which demonstrates many aspects of teamwork.)
- Suggests 15 people to start with.
- Question: Should we expect more involvement in this project from the trustees of our building fund then just manage money.
- 5 trustees. Active or passive role. Too big a task for 5 people.
- Suggests Action group of 15 devotees.
- Other ideas to address: Do we need trustees at all?
- Cissy: How often to elect trustees.?
- Will they be able to also take on other roles?
- Jim: Any trustees must be a regular member only.
- Cissy: Br Girish agrees.
- Peter: Create vision first
- Janusz: Compare the benefits members have from owning or renting the premises. Pro’s and con’s. Ownership - big responsibility.
- Helen: Create Temple out of vision.

Laurie: We need to pray. Write down ideas. (Suggests email responses.)
Cissy : Anyone here wants to be in a core group?
Supriya: Suggests questionnaire for devotees.
Janusz: Question of life-long trustee membership needs to be addressed.
Can we change the Trust Deed?
Laurie: Asked for volunteer to prepare questionnaire for survey. Supriya agreed.

Action: Supriya to prepare questionnaire one week after retreat to send to Laurie.

Les: Asked about the resigning date of exiting trustees.
Cissy: Suggests July 18 as a resigning date. (*We subsequently found that we have to postpone this to a later date to be announced.*)
Cissy: Asked if Treasurer should be a trustee.
Helen: It would be a good idea.

Cissy finished the meeting with a closing prayer.

Appendix 1:

SYDNEY MEDITATION CENTRE OF Self-Realization Fellowship [SRF]

(background notes as at February, 2010)

THE NEW PREMISES BUILDING FUND [NPBF] TRUST DEED

The NPBF Trust was set up in 2004 so that devotees wishing to donate, or leave a bequest in their Will, to purchase a permanent meeting place for Sydney Centre of SRF could be assured that the money would be used only for that purpose.

Complications associated with a significant bequest to Sydney Centre /Mother Centre in the Will of Mr Harry Peck, a long time devotee who died in 1999 acted as a major catalyst for action. About that time a sub-Committee appointed by the Managing Council at the then Redfern St premises was actively searching for new premises to rent or purchase* and a number of new premises fund-raising meetings and activities were held.

Setting up a Trust provided a legal and financial framework for dedicated New Premises funds. The trust deed was drawn up (over 2 years) through various drafts and lengthy consultations with solicitors in Sydney and LA (Mother Centre Legal department), bank officers, Centre members and monks in Centre Department at the SRF international headquarters in Los Angeles. Five Trustees who are long time members were elected at a general meeting of the Centre to oversee the fund. Four of the five trustees must sign any cheque for outgoing monies for new premises purchase only after full Mother Centre and member approval processes have been completed. Any premises so purchased become the property of SRF Church headquarters in Los Angeles. The full Deed of Trust is available for scrutiny at the Centre. A brochure about the NPBF and Trust Deed and how to make a donation or bequest by Will is also available.

Monies donated to the NPBF Fund can only be invested in a totally secure account. They are held in a Commonwealth Bank Term Deposit account at the highest available rates of interest. Current Trustees (who all happened to have been Treasurers in the past] have acted as 'executive officers' of the Fund. On behalf of the Trustees, the Centre Treasurer has received and banked donations in a holding account, transferred money to receive the best investment returns and rolled funds over when the fixed Term Deposit was due.

As at the last rollover date, 8th January, 2010, the NPBF balance was \$136,825.77. The updated figure will be shown on the Sydney Centre noticeboard at each roll-over of the investment. # [* At that time a lot of effort, including a Development Application to Lane Cove Council, was made for the possible rental/ later purchase of a former chapel in Berry Road St Leonards opposite the North Shore Hospital.]

Appendix 2:

Sydney SRF Centre General Meeting – New Premises Acquisition Forum 18/04/2010

Presented by Laurie Grant – Managing Council member

Form Circle

Meditation – Visualise favorite Guru picture in spiritual eye

Minute taker

Forum in 2 parts

- 1) Discover what we want AND
- 2) How we can begin.

Laurie to lead with overview, then group discuss, ONE at a time.

My experience over last 3 weeks – huge **roller coaster** journey of ongoing questions and realisations. Daunting and exciting. Who is excited by this? Feel trepidation?

I knew nothing about the group situation regarding trust and funds. **First I felt excitement**, enthusiasm – yes of course, make it happen.

Meditated for a few days – as a managing council member I realized had no idea what the group wanted, reign in ego, realize I can't represent group if ignorant. Not about me, talked to some members, found no real clear awareness.

We need to get together to find out where we are at, what we want. I can't RESPONSIBLY make decisions as managing council member until we get together and reach a consensus..

Meditated a few days – realization, it's a **huge task, many challenges**, much work (from my PROPERTY EXPERIENCE with own property development, investment companies and trusts). Had my own companies and trusts – who will do it? Council, trustees, committees? Realise it would require the WHOLE group working together, taking ownership, participate.

Are we willing to take it on? **Eyes wide open**. Ask ourselves honestly – lots of issues to pull me back.

Meditate more days – Realise with Master – anything is possible. Focus power of attention for success. Realised – focus on all the reasons why not possible and that grows. Change to all reasons **HOW it can** be and that grows. What we focus grows. We choose. **Solution focus or problem focus**. For every problem ask Master “Show me how”

So big, so important, must be approach properly. **PRUDENT**. Patience, go slow, get it right. **Create first on spiritual and causal** before outer work. So many questions came up, over time meditating gave me new answers and **insights and clarity – came from within**, not so much from discussion. **Less talk**.

Easy to get caught up in the outer – fundraising, structures etc. Realised – **Above all – right spirit**, Master not so concerned with what we do, more **HOW we do it, who we become**. Inner not outer. Realised, we can choose, actually great opportunity to **CHOOSE to do this with JOY only**. Became an exercise for me – get off the roller coaster and choose only to proceed if it is with JOY – keep asking myself, **if not, DROP IT**.

Saw that **Perth** have a centre, amazing example of **Glendale**, how Master got **Mt Washington**. Realised, the outer questions's of where money etc not important. Who we become, **when group ready temple appears**

Q - **How do we make ourselves ready** to receive – inner work AND outer work.

SO – Where are we at? What do we want? Understanding there is a lot of work involved? Are we all ready to participate? Ask ourselves honestly? Lake Shrine devotees – Service begins where convenience ends.

10 MINS DISCUSSION – NO URGENCY, not trying to get answers now, a process, just get ball rolling, and go with it.

I realized I couldn't really grasp the full consequences in a short session – took weeks or days to get **deeper insights take time** beyond **initial superficial opinions and reactions**. No shortcuts. We need **time to go away and ask ourselves** – what is right? Am I ready to contribute – not the group, nobody else, just ME, I am the group, when the call to action comes?

Take these questions away and meditate, talk to Master. **Respond by email? VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

PART 2 - TRUSTS

Requires a **team to focus the efforts** of everyone. Came up for me around the **question of trustees**. What do we **want and expect** from those in such roles? **HANDS UP** – who is excited by “committees, meetings” etc?

First, leadership group is roles that rotate for as long as it takes to get to the destination. Ask oneself, am I ready to put my hand up, or respond if called upon. Do what I can.

Canada Geese – V formation and working together .(see story below)

5 key areas to focus on / facilitate -

- 1) Vision and communication with everyone, regularly and ongoing – **LEADER + 2-3 others**
- 2) Spiritual foundation – inner **MOST IMPORTANT**(lead **all** in prayer, meditation, affirmation, visualize)
- 3) Property finding
- 4) Fund raising
- 5) Structures, ownership, legal, admin, finance, grants etc

All **work together** – one person to facilitate, focus and manage each area, **engage and enlist others**. **Not feel qualified?**, just be OPEN. **Like MA** when Guruji asked her to organize convocation. Just do best.

Trustees – my quandary. We had/have a group of 5. What role should they play? Basic fiduciary, minimum by law. Or take the **deeper spirit – duty of loyalty** to do the most possible for highest good of beneficiaries. Like a **family trust** to me. What I want for my kids and loved ones. Really **make it move ahead** Trust deed only requires absolute minimum – must have **finger on pulse** for property activity, delegate/responsible, **HOW?**

Ask myself, **do we want trustees who take it on a deeper level.** Other wise there's not much to it.

So we need to **decide**, do we want to operate with trustees who will play this deeper leadership role OR do we want to elect 5 trustees AND 5 for **another committee**, OR decide the trustees become a **defacto** Action Group OR **other ideas....?** What do we want – these just my musings.

Also to consider, Br **Girish suggested rotate trustees**, or any position after 3 years max. Have 3 resignations now? Also, **representation by Managing Council** so direct tie to council and Mother Cente.

Treasurer AUTOMATIC trustee? **Answers to Council, decisions to council?**

Discuss 10 MINS.

NO URGENCY, not trying to get answers now, a process, just get ball rolling, live with it.

I couldn't grasp the full consequences in a short session – took weeks or days to get deeper insights beyond first superficial opinions and reactions. No shortcuts.

We need to **go away and ask ourselves** – what is right? Am I ready to contribute – not the group, nobody else, just ME, I am the group, when the call to action comes?

So many things I was considering, could talk for 3 days on this. **Keep asking self – KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Only what is necessary – so **much comes up** – **NOTE IT DOWN** self in notebook – **ask for answers.**

NEXT STEP

Survey questionnaire

Decide if we (I) are ready and willing to participate? Decide on how we want it managed. **Are we ready to vote or need to meet again first? Go deep, ASK.** We decide, Guru show us how – **one step, baby steps.**

Fully **informed decisions**, haste causes **pain**, my property experience, keep **saying NO till its right.**