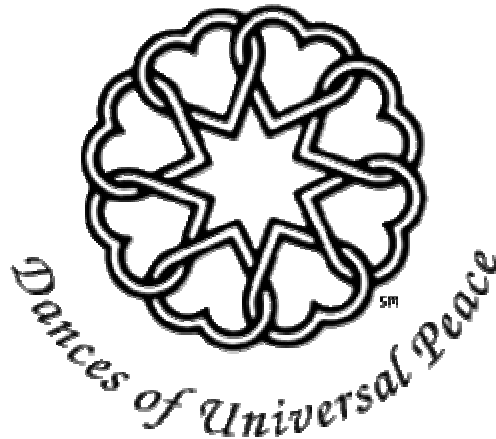


Seattle Dance Circle Community



Vision Team Report

As an extension of the Spirit of the Dance,
We offer this guidance and vision to our circle.

The Vision Team Proposal Overview

– as of February 2003

Elements of the Living System

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– as of February 2003

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– as of July 2003

The Vision Team Proposal Overview

as of February 2003

We learned that organic growth is what works best for the Seattle Dance Circle of the Dances of Universal Peace. The Spirit of the Dance is the life-force which animates our Circle, and all of us are parts of the eco-system in which the Spirit lives. We visualize ourselves as a living system, where all of the parts need each other, where all the parts support one another, and where all beings are mutually responsible to one another.

In a living ecosystem, change happens through many small shared steps as the whole group individually and collectively learns, grows, and changes. Since we really are a living system, many of the changes that were requested have already happened.

This proposal centers on enabling and facilitating this kind of growth.

We were intentionally minimalistic with this proposal. There are still many ideas and opportunities to be addressed. Rather than a large complex all-at-once proposal, these other opportunities are best addressed through an organic growth process.

For example, at the last planning meeting it was decided that Hafiz Lu should go ahead with being a point person for holding an occasional healing circle that would finish just before the Keystone Dance would start. It took a long time and a lot of discussion to get to that agreement. We all changed and grew a bit during that process, and this is a good example of the organic growth process.

The goal of this proposal is to better leverage existing resources in the Dance Circle, and to provide better support for organic growth.

The key parts of this proposal are:

1. To enable access for all Seattle Dance Circle Community participants to the planning process.
2. To be as open as possible to effectively leverage all volunteered skills and time for Dance related activities.
3. To remind ourselves that at Dance we are all in service to each other, and to frequently stop and listen to each other so we can be more successful with this.
4. To approach all aspects of Dance with an open heart.

Here are a few of the significant changes that have already happened over the last half year:

- The decision making process has become more inclusive.
- The beautification volunteers have added a significant dimension, but a standard centerpiece is available if no volunteer is available.
- Many specific requests have been honored, such as taking requests for final Dances, starting and ending peacefully with adequate time, and including more Goddess Dances.
- We usually close the Circle with words that encourage hugs to new folks as well as allowing space for those who don't wish to hug.

These changes are already addressing key issues raised in the poll last year. A large number of the suggestions had to do with requests for keeping the feeling of the Dance alive after the music stops. All of the examples above illustrate how we are working to do this.

We expect for there to be more change in the next few years. This will be a result of people working with others to refine ideas, and then bring proposals to the planning meeting. Every living organism matures, births new aspects, and ultimately passes on. There are likely to be multiple revisions of proposals for change as organic growth happens. Thus all the current structures by which the Spirit is expressed will change over time.

Every Dancer has the right to have wonderful visions for the community. Then the Dancer works with others to build agreement on what is implemented. The Seattle Dance Circle is one of the most activity rich Dance communities, and it takes lots of work from lots of people to support this richness. Many acts of leadership, from many people, are required to accomplish this wealth of activity.

At the same time that many tasks and chores are being done, especially in a Dance Circle, much effort needs to be made in relationship building to build and sustain the community. It is the interconnectedness of organisms that passes energy and resources around an ecosystem in a manner that wastes nothing and yet nourishes everyone.

Most of this proposal has already started to take effect because so many people have made a personal commitment to increase our collective open-heartedness. We thank the Dancers who have given their energy in the last several months to create a more vibrant circle.

Only by continuing to reaffirm these commitments will these improvements be sustained.

The “Elements of the Living System, Which is the Seattle Dance Circle Community” is described in a separate document so the extent of the community will be clear to everybody. The only formal aspect to the current proposal is to clarify and affirm the “Procedures for the Seattle Dance Circle Community Planning Meeting”. This is also a separate document.

We believe these changes fulfill the original (and updated) mandate for the Vision Team, and after this proposal, or a revision, is accepted at the Seattle Dance Circle Community planning meeting, this committee should be dissolved.

In some ways, this whole proposal can be summarized by this quotation:

The remedy to all ills is to live with an open heart.

Maria Greene

Submitted by the Vision Team members in January 2003:

Brian, Helen, insui, Phil, Roger, Sandra

Approved as a statement of where we are now at the February 2003 Dance Circle Planning Meeting.

Elements of the Living System

Which is the Seattle Dance Circle Community

As of February 2003

Support for the Spirit of this Community is generated in the following gatherings.

Wednesday and Saturday Dances at Keystone Church

Regular Dances are the major way our system expresses the Spirit. Simply coming to the Dances with a sincere heart is a major contribution. Dance Leading, musicianship, beautification and greeting are additional ways to contribute energy and resources to our web of life.

Dance Leaders' Team Meetings

The Dance Leaders' Team meets occasionally to deepen the skills of leadership or to discuss topics specific to leading. Membership and categories of membership are set by the Team itself.

As for any other component of the infrastructure that supports our living system, the Team is accountable to the community, as is the community to the Team. For example, the Leaders thank the Dancers for the positive energy they bring to the Dance, and the Dancers thank the Leaders for musical and spiritual leadership.

Community Planning Meetings

Generally these meetings have been, and will be, where the planning, scheduling, and budget decisions for the Dance Circle are discussed and made.

A separate document details the changes from the common practice of a year ago. These changes have largely happened, and the goal of the proposal is to clarify and affirm these changes.

Community Days

Occasionally a special community-wide meeting is called in order to add clarity, or to add diversity, to the connections between all the participants of the Circle. Usually the day is focused on a specific topic in a format that mixes Dances and discussion.

Special Dance Events

Specific opportunities such as a retreat led by an eminent guest Leader may be sponsored (and organized) by our Dance Circle. Special workshops deepen our individual connections to the Spirit.

Announcements of Social Events

Individual participants of the Dance Circle may sponsor independent Dance Community social events. This adds a personal dimension to our open-heartedness with each other. These events can be announced at the Dance Circles. People are encouraged to do so briefly, and bring flyers with the details.

Online Discussion

Announcements and questions related to the local Dances also happen on the dupnw@yahogroups.com email list. Anybody can join the email list. Announcements for all of the Puget Sound related Dances are made on this list.

There is also an international discussion list DancingPeace@yahogroups.com which anybody can join.

Planning Meeting Procedures

For the Seattle Dance Circle Community

as of July 2003

Overview

This document reflects changes in our Circle that have happened gradually during 2002 and 2003. The Vision Team process has produced these guidelines for how we work together and make decisions, and not a set of formal bylaws. Our intention is to increase both general participation and effective decision-making. In order for these guidelines to work well, we must willingly follow the intention behind them, and keep attuned to the Spirit.

Section 1: Conducting Our Meetings

Overview: Increasing the clarity of the roles increases the smoothness of cooperation and effectiveness of our meetings.

1. To Eat, Dance and Pray Together

Overview: Continue to eat, dance and pray at every planning meeting – if possible start with a meal, then always Dance, and keep the Spirit alive in every word we share with one another.

2. Dance Leader Attendance at Planning Meetings

Overview: Dance Leaders are encouraged to attend the planning meeting. The Dance Leader Team will set a flexible range of expectations about how many planning meetings an individual Leader is expected to attend in a year.

3. Role of Meeting Convener

Overview: Add the role of “Convener” to the planning meeting to greatly conserve the energy of the whole group. A Convener solicits agenda items early in the month and publishes the agenda a week ahead of the meeting. Thus those who can’t attend may send comments and those who really care about an issue may show up.

- a. The Convener might or might not be the same person as the Facilitator.
- b. Or, we could seek co-conveners (one Leader, one Dancer) for a longer period of time to provide more continuity, while the facilitator role continued to rotate monthly.

4. Role of Voice for Harmony

Overview: The intentional community movement suggests adding a role for the “Voice for Harmony” or the “Voice for the Spirit of the Dances” to each meeting.

- a. Someone(s) could be designated as a “Voice for Harmony” for the planning meeting to watch process, promote kindness, give authentic appreciations liberally, and debrief with the Conveners/Facilitators after a gathering as a learning tool.
- b. In addition, we could add this role as an option to the Wednesday and Saturday Dances.

5. Role of Facilitator

Overview: The Facilitator of the meeting is ultimately responsible for organizing the content of the meeting and guiding the process of the meeting.

- a. The Facilitator has the responsibility to ensure the meeting is being actively convened by assuming this role, or to ensure a designated Convener is fulfilling this role.
- b. The Facilitator may appoint a Voice for Harmony.
- c. During the meeting the Facilitator focuses the group’s energy on the agenda, and clarifies and summarizes discussion.
- d. By asking people to speak briefly, the Facilitator advances the agenda in a timely manner and encourages full participation.
- e. The Facilitator tracks the decision making process, identifies decisions, ensures decisions are complete before moving on to other discussion, and ensures that plans are made for implementation.

6. Planning Meeting Schedule and Preparations

Overview: It is important to attract as much energy into supporting the Dances as possible, and to leverage our efforts in the most effective way.

- a. Hold the planning meetings monthly, so that issues are dealt with in a timely way, and the work load at any one meeting will be reduced.
- b. Hold the planning meetings on a set day, so members of the community may more easily plan ahead to attend. Thus the resources of the wider Circle will be more easily fed into the system.
- c. Regularly following the schedule below will enable the most effective use of people’s time in preparing for the meetings and responding to issues.

First week in the cycle: solicit agenda items

Second week in the cycle: publish agenda

Third week in the cycle: hold community planning meeting

Fourth week in the cycle: publish minutes

7. Rotating Planning Meeting Roles

Overview: Rotation of roles expands leadership in the community, spreads the work load, and helps all participants understand the challenges of each role so they can better support the person currently in the role.

- a. The roles of Facilitator and Scribe will continue to rotate according to an established roster in the meeting minutes.
- b. Community members may volunteer to join the roster, after having attended several meetings, thus ensuring a renewable flow of energy into the planning process.

Section 2: Consensus Decision Making Process

Overview: Anyone participating in the Seattle Dance Circle may come, contribute, and discuss agenda items. Planning meeting decisions continue to be made through building a consensus of the group. Consensus is collaboration, not compromise, so solutions are sought which are deeply satisfying to all. Solutions are created by listening and learning from each others' wisdom until peoples' understanding evolves to the point that there is agreement on a solution and a decision.

8. Discussion of Proposals

- a. Ideally, discussion will continue until everybody feels comfortable with the decision.
- b. During the discussion, agreement is reached as to how critical a decision is, and how much discussion is reasonable for that decision.

9. Convening a Quorum for Decision Making

- a. A quorum for approving decisions is 6 people who participate in the Seattle Circle of the Dances of Universal Peace. This quorum must include a minimum of 2 members of the Seattle Dance Team. Six people will provide the needed diversity for quality decisions. Two members of the Dance Team will provide adequate attunement to the Dances to keep the Spirit of the Community on course. (The quorum was changed from 6 to 4 on 6/27/2007.)
- b. Persons are eligible to be counted for the quorum, if they have attended 2 of the last 6 previous planning meetings.
- c. For major significant decisions, the Facilitator is responsible for ensuring that a true quorum is present before the decision is made, or postponing the decision until the true quorum is present. True quorums are present when all parties significantly affected by the decision have been given adequate preparatory information, notice of meetings, and opportunity to participate in the process.

10. Coming to Consensus Decisions

Overview: Each person decides whether he or she is in agreement with the decision, must stand aside from the decision, or must block the decision.

- a. Those coming to agreement with the decision may have mixed feelings, and not be perfectly comfortable with some minor points. Yet in the interest of helping the group to move forward, they are willing to agree to and support the decision.
- b. Participants may choose to stand aside from a decision when they have strong personal objections to supporting that decision. If 3 people or more are “standing aside”, then a solid decision that will support the group goals hasn’t been reached; discussion should continue, or the proposal should be tabled. After a decision is reached, persons “standing aside” will not be asked to help implement the decision, but they will be expected to live with it.
- c. Persons are eligible to be counted as standing aside from a decision, if they have attended 2 of the last 6 previous planning meetings.
- d. When participants oppose a proposal because they are convinced that it would be very damaging to the group, then they may choose a blocking position. It requires 2 people, each taking a blocking position, to block a proposal. Blocking a decision is rarely done. Usually after more discussion, at more meetings, a way forward is found.
- e. The privilege to block decisions is linked to participation and taking responsibility, and is granted to those who have attended 8 of the last 12 previous planning meetings.
- f. In cases of hardship, when it is difficult for someone to regularly attend planning meetings, the privilege to block may be given, on a meeting by meeting basis, to those who provide some significant alternative service to the community’s infrastructure. People who are in a hardship situation, and are interested in blocking a decision, must notify the facilitator as soon as possible.

11. **Background on Consensus Decision Making**

Overview: “Blocking” and “stand aside” are standard consensus phrases. Their exact usage varies from group to group and over time. Resources below provide additional background on consensus. This background may help participants better understand the unique aspects of consensus, and to become more effective in working with the process.

Basic Resources

“Basic Values for Consensus to Work Well” by Tree Bressen
www.treegroup.info/toolbox/B5-values.html

“Consensus Points” by Tree Bressen
www.treegroup.info/tolbox/B10-consensus_points.html

“Consensus: A Group View on Decisions” by Roger Padvorac
www.skilledwright.com/Consensus-GroupView.htm

“Consensus Facilitation Suggestions” by Roger Padvorac
www.skilledwright.com/ConsensusFacilitationSuggestions.htm

In Depth Resources

Tree Bressen, a well known facilitator and trainer in group process, supports a web site on group process. This site provides in depth resources on group process and consensus, including a bibliography.

www.treegroup.info