

Study, Teachers and the Red Maple Sangha

a revised statement, January 2010

We understand that, in earlier times, Dharma teaching was less available, through materials and teachers to whom we might have limited access. We also understand that we now live in an extraordinary period where massive amounts of Dharma material are available in print, audio and electronic form in ways never before imagined. Rather than struggling to search for limited sources of teaching, we are faced with multiple sources, often of variable quality.

Our task then is to search widely as well as deeply to explore the breadth and the depth of Dharma presentations, to gain a capacity to study critically and finally to identify whatever sources and teachers resonate with our capacities as students, so we may deepen our knowledge and practice. We understand that excellent teachers may still be rare, and so we need to hone our critical skills so as not to be distracted by teachers of inadequate or unwholesome skills.

The Red Maple Sangha:

- encourages all its members and associates to investigate Dharma teaching as broadly as possible before making any decision to identify with any school or sect;
- encourages all its members and associates to seek and evaluate prospective teachers before making a serious commitment to them; and
- accepts the possibility that deep Dharma capacities and even full Awakening may be possible without any relationship with a Teacher.

The Red Maple Sangha was originally established as a community of practice, unaffiliated with any specific sect or school of Dharma and unaffiliated with any living or past Dharma teacher, *sensei*, *thera* or *guru*. This was, in itself an exercise of skilful means, in that it was an appropriate response to the absence of any Dharma groups or teachers willing to provide a permanent teaching presence.

After several years of functioning in this manner, the RM Sangha discovered:

1. a harmony between the intentions and views of RMS and those of the relatively new presence of Japanese Tendai in North America,
2. the convenient location of the Western headquarters of Japanese Tendai, the Tendai Buddhist Institute, within an acceptable driving distance to RMS' main centre, and,
3. a willingness of TBI to welcome RMS members into its practice events and to train RMS members, up to and including full ordination within the Tendai tradition.

We hold that our present Sangha practice continues to include a range of needs, from first investigations and practice, to a more mature and guiding relationship with a

teacher. At this time, the most compatible relationship for RMS is to establish and expand a "branch sangha" relationship with TBI. We accept that whatever we may lose by this affiliation is more than compensated by the teaching, support and fellowship provided by such an affiliation.

We accept that teachers within many Dharma traditions may still have crucial information, teaching and inspiration for us on our path and we benefit from remaining open to them, through study and discussion. All those who practice within any RMS regular practice events are free to identify themselves however they choose and welcome to find whatever meaning and balance they can with their personal development and the specifically Tendai style we have adopted.

May all beings realize Buddhahood !