



SFM NEWSLETTER

February 2020

ACQUISITION OF 520 LEWIS STREET FOR MONKS' RESIDENCE COMPLETED!!

First, the SFM Board would like to thank everyone who contributed to the recent purchase of the rental house. We found it to be the most appropriate for use as monks' residence due to its location being adjacent to the main property. The closing was completed on January 3, 2020, and the cost for this acquisition was \$125,946.90.



Our newly acquired monks' residence at 520 Lewis Street, Englewood, Fla.

We intend to keep our audience informed of the progress of SFM as much as possible through our website: <https://www.sarasotaforestmonastery.org>. In addition, as time permits, we summarize the same information in the SFM Newsletter so that everyone interested in our monastery can learn about our planned activities for the year and to serve as information for anyone who wishes to participate in our future activities.

MONASTERY BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

As mentioned in the past, the preliminary estimates to construct the Monastery on the Stewart Street property as planned are approximately \$600,000.

Careful planning is a must. The law requires that we address the environmental issues prior to and during construction. Protection of endangered species is a must, but as we all know, not harming any animals is a key aspect of Buddhist principles that we will adhere to. Part of our property is designated as wetland and its maintenance per regulations is our responsibility. The county has identified certain invasive plants to be removed. There are over 100 trees, including those to accommodate infrastructure, which need to be removed. The process of removing these trees is tedious, and the cost is projected to be nearly \$100,000. Prior to any building construction, we are required to complete infrastructure (storm drainage, retention ponds, wetland protection, roads, water/sewer lines, sidewalks, parking, etc.) which is expected to cost over \$300,000. The Board decided to delay construction work until sufficient funds are available.

We want to thank all of our volunteers who are helping with the upkeep of the Monastery properties, including those who come in from time to time and tend to the garden.

Now that SFM has ownership of the house, perhaps this added availability will allow us to invite monks to spend time at our monastery. We intend to keep the monks' residence serene at all times per Thai Forest Tradition and not to be used for social gatherings, etc. In addition to the monks' residence, we also have three platforms in the forest for meditation.

We are in the process of adding the entry way from Stewart Street with integrated culverts in the very near future to reduce the burden from Lewis Street which is designated for residential traffic. Our neighbors are exceptionally friendly and supportive. Consistent with Buddhist principles, it is imperative that we respect their privacy and expectations.

RESIDENT MONK(S) FOR THE SFM

We are very pleased that Bhante Thiep has accepted our invitation to stay at SFM on a long-term basis. We have enjoyed his teachings as well as Dhamma discussions with him in the past and greatly appreciate the opportunity to continue these experiences again.

We continue to search for resident monks as well as an Abbot for the SFM. Our objective is to find monks who follow the Buddhist Forest Tradition, along with Vinaya codes. Admittedly it is quite ambitious to find a scholar who is fluent in sermons and Buddhist teachings to guide us as our devotees deserve the best.

Meanwhile, we continue to invite monks who respect the codes of forest traditions to come and stay on a temporary basis to conduct sermons, meditation sessions, and provide guidance to lay practitioners. So far, each visiting monk has been instrumental to our practice, and we appreciate their teaching. In addition to extended stays by Bhante Thiep from North Carolina, visiting monks over the past several years include Bhante Vilasa from Malaysia, Phra David from Dhammasala Forest Monastery in Michigan, Phra Robert from Forest Dhamma Monastery in Virginia, and Ajahn Jiab and Phra Ron from Wat Metta in San Diego. In addition, in 2018 and 2019, SFM was blessed with visits from several senior Ajahns (teachers) including Luang Por Thong-In from Thailand, Tahn Chao Khun from North Carolina, and Tahn Chao Khun Vijitrdhammapani from Kissimmee. Visits from all of the venerable monks have helped to inspire and uplift the community, provide cherished opportunities to hear the Dhamma, and practice with the example of masters.

At the time of this writing, we have Venerable Chao Khun Keng Khemako (Ajahn Keng) and Ajahn Jiab scheduled to visit for a week in February. Ajahn Keng is a Singaporean monk and the Abbot of Santi Forest Monastery in Malaysia. Both monks have over 30 years in robe.

Luang Por Thong-In has a planned visit to the United States in the month of June. During this visit, the Board has invited Luang Por to SFM. His visit is tentatively scheduled for the week of the 22nd. We will ask Luang Por to stay at our monastery during the weekend so that our members who work during the week may have the opportunity to meet with him.

It would be seriously remiss not to mention the continuing support from John and Daeng Raab since the onset of SFM. They have been assisting us on all fronts, including in our search for monks and providing guidance to the Board as much as necessary.

Please let the Board know if there are other ideas or if anyone is able to explore further options regarding

visiting monks or resident monks. Please remember to emphasize our mission and objectives while talking to the monks.

KATHINA



With gratitude to Venerable Chao Khun Phra Vijitrdhammapani, the Abbot of Wat Florida Dhammaram in Kissimmee, SFM has been able to celebrate Kathina two years in a row. Kathina requires a minimum of five monks to commemorate the event, and it would be nearly impossible without his help. His kindness has made it possible to organize the event. Of course meritorious initiatives by Bhante Thiep are respectfully admired as well.

MEDITATION PRACTICE

Bhante Thiep is expected to return to SFM at the end of March, and we will resume the weekly meditation sessions at that time, if not before. As soon as the details of the program are confirmed, we will share them with you.

FUNDRAISING



In order to operate the SFM, including inviting visiting monks, and to complete future projects, we appreciate continued donation from our devotees. We will continue to organize fundraising activities, including, but not limited to, the Spring Festival on the evening of April 18 2020. The event will be held at Venice Gardens Civic Center located at 406 Shamrock Blvd., Venice, Florida 34293.

Any other volunteers and fundraising ideas are welcome.

WITH METTA,

The SFM Board

Sarasota Forest Monastery

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In response to our wishes to purchase this house for the Monks' Residence, Luang Por Thong-In wrote his name on the door and stated, "this is now a monks' house."