

INNER LIGHT MINISTRIES CORE PRINCIPLES

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ratified by the ILM Board on 4/11/2007

Membership

ILM is not a membership organization. One registers affiliation through participation and support. There are no restrictions on membership or participation in other religious/spiritual organizations. We strive to be inclusive.

The organization is fluid and elastic. Efforts should be made to cut down the distinctions between “who belongs” and “who doesn’t.” First time participants should feel not only welcome, but as though they have a stake in what is taking place.

The ones called to ILM will feel “at home.” They will resonate with the consciousness and the intent of the ministry.

Opportunities to participate should be maximized and barriers to participation should be few. Each person is to be encouraged to give his/her unique gifts. Opportunities to participate stretch the individual to express more of his/her divine potential.

ILM respects the fact that its participants come from all walks of life and different spiritual traditions. We support all spiritual paths that lead to the Truth of Oneness and encourage participants to continue in their chosen paths.

Oneness

Our creed is “There is only One of us here.” Spiritual community is an opportunity for us to both practice and experience our Oneness. This does require, however, moving beyond one’s comfort zones, familiar defense mechanisms, exclusive identities, biases, and prejudices.

It is not the intent of ILM to provide a “safe harbor” for any one particular socio-demographic profile. Diversity in terms of age, race, class, spiritual background, gender, sexuality, marital status, physical abilities, etc. is encouraged and valued. Appropriate support will be given to assist people in reconciling their “issues” so that they may be more spiritually available.

It is the intent of ILM to demonstrate the possibility of living together in harmony through the daily practice of Universal Spiritual Principles. ILM intends to incorporate best practices in this field, as well as create new and innovative models.

Interpersonal Relationships

All persons are to be treated with dignity and respect. Each person's life and life experience is as valuable as the next. We are all students and teachers of each other.

In every interaction ILM requires the utmost of honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior. There is to be no "cutting corners" of spiritual principle for the sake of expediency. We are accountable to each other for not only our words and actions, but for what we harbor in our hearts, as well.

We are committed to "minding our minds." We understand that what we think about, we bring about. We ascribe to the Psalmist's intent "Create in us a clean heart, Oh Lord, and renew a right spirit within us."

We recognize that in spiritual community, people's buttons will be pushed. We are committed to working through our issues and using these moments when our buttons are pushed as opportunities for mutual healing. We strive to exercise patience and compassion with each other's growth processes.

Differences of opinion are not to be criticized but reconciled. Non-reconciliation is not an option. Distancing and avoidance are not encouraged. Gossip and meddling is dissuaded. All matters are to be taken to prayer, preferably ahead of time.

The only thing that needs to be healed is our sense of separation. Conflict arises from the polarization of separation, not differences. We are committed to Oneness beyond separation. In seeming conflict, individuals are encouraged to ask for divine revelation as to how he/she is the "other person" and vice versa.

ILM asks all of its participants to make certain that their words pass the "3 Sufi Gates"

- 1) Is it true?
- 2) Does it need to be said?
- 3) Can it be said out of love with kindness?
- (4th gate Does it need to be said by me?)

Keep praying until you can get through all of the gates.

ILM ascribes to the adage "There are at least 2 sides to every story, and then there is the Truth." Individually and collectively, we seek the Truth, which requires that one relinquish one's attachment to one's own side. The Truth sets us free.

Participation

ILM is to provide multiple levels of participation at varying levels of spiritual depth and personal commitment. There should always be "something for everybody." Increased involvement is to be encouraged, but never forced. Individual growth curves are to be respected. People should never be shamed for what they are or are not doing.

Participation in spiritual community is a private and sacred matter. Coercion is never to be used. Self-selection is preferable. Contrasting and comparing one's spiritual journey to another's is to be discouraged.

Currently, ILM offers participation in seven programmatic umbrella ministries. (See section on ILM's ministries.) Each is considered of equal value. There is no competition between them. Quite the contrary, there is purposeful interdependence. Each ministry is a spiritual path. Participation in multiple ministries typically strengthens one's daily spiritual practice.

Activities are never random or mere busy work. Everything should be thought out and its spiritual significance sought. Every circumstance produces an opportunity for ministry. ILM stresses mindfulness thereby enhancing the enjoyment and substance of each experience.

People should understand why they are doing what they are doing, regardless of the size or nature of the task. Tasks and activities must reinforce Universal Spiritual Principles and have application in other areas of their lives.

More ways are being explored as to how people meaningfully participate outside of the local area.

The concept of ministry

ILM defines ministry as "the intent to bless and be blessed by all things." This is the starting premise, not the conclusion after the fact. This intent sets the tone that enables us to see through "our mind's eye."

All ILM participants are engaged in the activity of ministry. ILM's programmatic thrust is how we conduct our daily lives and utilize the Universal Spiritual Principles in all areas of life.

Participants are encouraged to cultivate their own personal relationship with the Divine and to integrate that relationship into every thought, word, and deed.

ILM stresses how each individual makes a difference in the world. The emphasis incorporates the collective, as well as individual impact each of us has. Participants are encouraged to commit, through their daily practice, to make the world more harmonious and spiritually enlightened.

Ministry is not so much what one does, but the consciousness with which one does it. Participants are encouraged to make every aspect of their lives – home, professional, political, social, economic, creative expression, etc., - a ministry. We emphasize being a blessing and looking through the appearances to receive a blessing.

Co-ministry

Co-ministry is at the core of ILM's philosophy. Co-ministry is the synergy that is created from being in alignment with one another. It is collaborative, inclusive, collegial, and mindful.

No one works independently of everyone else. There is pleasure in working together.

Co-ministry requires surrender of one's own agenda to Divine Order and Timing. On the surface, the process of co-ministry may appear to be slow and/or laborious. However, its benefit is that what comes out of co-ministry is deeply rooted and, therefore, easily nourished.

ILM firmly believes that “The consciousness that obtains, sustains.” Efforts are made not to force things into manifestation but to allow them to grow organically.

The “Visioning Process” is ILM’s primary tool of co-ministry. It starts with the awareness that Divine Ideas already exist and that our job is not to make things happen, but rather to provide the incubator space in consciousness that allows things to naturally unfold. It is a process of revelation that allows all participants to get a first hand awareness of purpose and right order.

Out of the Visioning Process comes the spiritual attributes trying to express, the intent, and the ministry (blessing) involved. From this vantage point specific goals and tasks are defined.

In the Visioning Process the playing field is leveled. Seniority has no bearing here. The process enables maximum alignment and instant buy-in. Visioning keeps ILM on purpose. “Pain pushes until vision pulls.” Understanding that drama is optional, we prefer to be pulled by vision.

Visioning is to be systemically repeated by every cluster within the organization.

Everything does not spring into unfoldment all at once. To the human eye, there may appear to be gaps. ILM’s policy is hold the space for right action rather than to fill it with something merely to hurry the process along. The anxieties around this practice of waiting for Divine Unfoldment must be institutionally, as well as individually, managed.

Co-ministry requires increased communication and involvement. It is recognized that the process of co-ministry may on the surface appear to inhibit individual initiative. The question that all are asked to ponder is “What is your deepest intent?” The ego is not always satisfied with this process, however, if the intent is ministry “All things work together for Good,” even seeming obstacles and/or delays. There is a collective good that becomes apparent.

Being of service is one of the hallmarks of co-ministry. Those committed to co-ministry seek opportunities to make a contribution in a supportive manner. Cross-training in service areas is encouraged.

Leadership

Stepping up to a leadership position is a major decision marking a deepening of one’s commitment to personal growth and spiritual transformation. Such a decision is respected and supported. Leadership is both challenging and fulfilling requiring much surrender and prayer.

Those who assume leadership positions at ILM are expected to ascribe to the ministry’s core principles and values. They are held to higher standards of accountability than the average participant. ILM leaders act as agents of the ministry and must be mindful of the ways in which their actions directly or inadvertently create policies and liabilities, as well as blessings.

ILM leaders are expected to conduct themselves with the utmost of professionalism, combining both good business practices with spiritual sensibilities. They are required to “go the extra mile” in all interactions. Loving is an important aspect of supervising.

ILM is to encourage leadership and to provide training for successful leadership. There should always be plans for leadership succession. One is not to hold onto to one's position, but to be looking for ways to empower others to share in or assume some of the responsibilities.

Planning is to be collaborative. Administration is to be involved early on and continuously in any discussions regarding the development of programs and structures. Leaders are not to merely report to administration, but are to **work with** administration, which has an active ex-officio spot on committees and work teams. This is especially true at this phase of ILM's development. ILM is growing quickly and coordination of activities is crucial to ensure effectiveness, timeliness, and adequate resource provision.

Leaders are to utilize the visioning process and encourage participation in it.

ILM leaders are pioneers and must possess an entrepreneurial spirit. At these early stages of development, ILM leaders are helping to institutionalize practices. They must balance taking personal initiative with working in co-ministry.

Directness and forthrightness are appreciated. Flag potential problems early. Share your insights and perspectives, even if they appear to be "bad news."

Leaders are expected to stick with the process and work out difficult situations. Seek assistance and guidance when needed. Every rough spot is an opportunity for healing.

ILM supports leaders taking care of themselves. Take time off as needed. Don't overextend. Be honest about your parameters. If you can't do something, acknowledge it early so that a replacement can be found.

ILM leaders work together as a team. The leaders are not a mere cluster of job functions, but real people, conscious on the path of life. More formal systems of support and communication are being developed. Leaders are asked to be mindful of the trickling down and rippling effects their decisions may have on other leaders and ministries.