

NETWORK OF LIGHT NEWS

A Model for a Meditation Evening

Meditation evenings with shared food feasts have long been a tradition for the Network of Light, with food so plentiful I have often thought it must have multiplied miraculously like the loaves and fishes at Jesus' events. And from a friend of the Network of Light, Padma Foye, comes a similar model she has experienced in the home of the Mehta family in Santa Clara, California.

The Mehtas have hosted an evening meditation in their home every Wednesday for the past 12 years, and the event is known affectionately by their guests as "Wednesdays." Approximately 40-50 people assemble in the family's living room and meditate from 7 to 8 p.m. Next, one person will read an inspirational passage from the website www.ijourney.org, and every other person then has an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about the passage.

At 9 p.m., Mrs. Mehta serves a seven-course Indian dinner, which she has prepared with great love with the help of her sons and daughters-in-law, saying this is her opportunity to give to and serve others. There is never a charge for the feast, as the family trusts those attending will be moved to pay for the gift afterward. And there is certainly never a lack of people volunteering to help clear away and wash the dishes from the meal.

While the dishes are being done,

many other attendees converse and prepare envelopes with "smile cards," which will be sent all over the world to those who request them, encouraging others to commit anonymous acts of kindness. For example, says Foye, you might pay the toll for the car behind you at a toll booth and ask the attendant to give the "smile card" to the driver. This also encourages the driver who receives the card and benefits from the random act of kindness to "pay it forward" to someone else. For more ideas like this one, Foye suggests visiting www.charityfocus.org.

Also in the Mehta home is a large "open source bookshelf" where anyone can take a book or leave one. These are not for borrowing or lending—they are for taking and replacing with other books.

I am reminded that in the Middle East, when people share food, they are making those with whom they share the food their family. Indeed, my brother, who is an Episcopal priest, insists this is what Jesus was symbolically trying to do with the loaves and the fishes—he was making people family.

Foye says she was blessed to be able to visit "Wednesdays" at the Mehta home six times while she was in Santa Clara and believes it is becoming a model for meditation evenings around the country. If it catches on in a big way, perhaps it will eventually unite the family of all us humans—an outcome devoutly to be wished!