



Consensus Decision-Making within Three Treasures Sangha

Three Treasures Sangha makes decisions using the consensus decision-making model. Often the word consensus is used to mean agreement among many or most of the people involved. But it can also refer to a specific process, as well as to a result. In the way consensus is used at Three Treasures, it means that all present must agree before an action is taken. The root word of consensus is **consent**. It does not mean you necessarily agree with a decision; it means you give permission, not agreement.

There are three possible responses to an issue: **yes**, **stand aside** or **no**. By saying **yes**, you give permission to the group to go ahead with a decision. **Standing aside** means the issue is one that you can't agree with but have no compelling reason to say no to.

Saying **no** is serious because it means you block consensus. This can be uncomfortable, especially if you are the only one to do it. However, if you honestly feel the group is going to do something wrong or harmful, it is a service to the community for you to say **no**. When each of us feels able to do this, we can be assured that the decisions we agree to are firm and truly the will of the sangha.

It takes time to discuss an issue until everyone involved has been heard and has had time to come to a solid conclusion. Sometimes it takes more than one meeting but the results are worth it. When we all have had time to work through our own and others' considerations on an issue, there is far more chance that each one of us can be at peace with the result and with each other.