



Time Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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Mindfulness and the Gulf Oil Spill	Ian Prattis ...	1
Freeing the Human Spirit in Canada's Prisons through Yoga/ Meditation	Peggy Campbell ..	3
8th Annual Friends for Peace Day, October 2, 2010 in Ottawa City Hall		4
Toltec Prayer	Miguel Ruiz	6
Seeking Integration: Part I	Bill Shields	6
Review of Blessed Unrest	Susan Kehoe.....	8
Sustainable Living at Pine Gate	Carolyn Hill	9
What Is Dharma Gaia?	Thomas Ellis	10
Mindfulness	Thay	11
The Most Direct Path	James Baraz.....	11
Thay in Vancouver 2011 – At the University of British Columbia.....		12
Taking Refuge in The Five Mindfulness Trainings	Ian Prattis.....	12
Thoughts From an Island Refugee	Yves Desnoyers	14
Consciousness	Ian Prattis	15
Declaration of Interdependence (Suzuki Foundation).....		16
The Buddha Is Still Teaching		17
Mother's Day		17
Many Hands	Jody Kessler	18
Lazy Days of Summer 2010	Margery Street	19
Pine Gate's Lazy Days of Summer Program 2010		20
Into The Future Meditation.....		20
Freshness at Pine Gate – Opening Flowers		21
The Small God Limited Dharma Syndrome Ian Prattis		22

Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Sangha, who practice engaged Buddhism in the

tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Friends of the sangha also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of 500-700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience are appreciated. The Pine Gate Sangha has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of sangha insight. Effortlessly it appears. Ian Prattis offers teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. Carolyn Hill teaches a regular Qi-Gong class as an introduction to mindfulness practice. The teachings, practices and ceremonies encourage the energies of mindfulness, concentration and insight to be well established in every day life. Engaged practice extends throughout the city of Ottawa, as Pine Gate Sangha is the nucleus of Friends for Peace – www.friendsforpeace.ca - which has a mandate for peace, planetary care and social justice. The Pine Gate Sangha welcomes old and new friends to its regular and extended activities.

Mindfulness and the Gulf Oil Spill Ian Prattis

It is time to examine our minds, consumption patterns and personal culpability in the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. The plugging of the oil well is not an end to the crisis, merely the beginning of identifying our part in it. Guidelines are necessary. They are available from Thich Nhat Hanh in the shape of the mindfulness trainings – a welcome relief and antidote to the unending spin we are surrounded by on a daily basis.

It is no surprise to discover that BP deliberately underestimated the amount of oil released into the Gulf of Mexico from its destroyed Deepwater Horizon oilrig. Any surprise is caused by the powerful PR arm of not only BP, but also of Haliburton and TransOcean – its partners in this ill fated venture. Their spin has not, however, fooled the stock market, as the share values of these corporate giants have plummeted down. Yet BP ads touting their environmental sensitivity continue and can no longer be taken seriously by any thinking person. But do people actually think? Or do they prefer to be caught in a whirlwind of spin from business, government and other stakeholders in an environmental disaster, the like of which the US has never before encountered? BP is in high level spin mode, while directors of the company are off loading their stocks in the company and blaming their partners! So many lies are being told by BP and the government about the multiplier effects of the oil spill and deny journalists access to see the clean up process or from photographing the devastation readily visible from satellites.

The truth is that not only are ocean ecosystems and wetlands at risk, vital economic sectors – fishing, tourism and real estate – are also at risk in all Gulf states. This has a mainstream impact on all related industries throughout America. The tons of toxic oil dispersants used to break up the surface oil slick has settled on the ocean floor. There, it contaminates the oceanic ecosystem. Not only are fish, marine mammals and other wildlife being killed – the industries their harvest supported are also being killed. The entire Gulf of Mexico may well become a dead zone, and this will extend to the human populations that depended on its vibrancy.

The US administration's threats to put its foot on BP's throat and even take over the operation to halt the oil flow into the Gulf is further spin and quite ludicrous. The federal agencies with a stake in offshore drilling permits and environmental protection are scrambling to deflect their culpability

and “coziness” with oil giants. The use of the term “coziness” is a White House deflection from the true name of the relationship between government agencies and oil giants. The correct term is *corruption*. “Coziness” is further pointless spin, particularly, as the US federal government does not have the technology or the expertise to cap the oil spill. If the US administration was truly serious, why do they not freeze the financial assets of the three corporations in order to foot the cleanup bill?

CNN, FOX and other media have their own spin-doctors to amplify the volume, so spin becomes a norm for everyone. But neither government nor the media are asking the deeper questions. It is clear that BP is running the operation in the Gulf while the federal government huffs and puffs with importance in the chain of command, yet does not occupy the driving seat. The question of government/corporate complicity is a serious one. Questions are not being asked about the loss of cultures dependant on harvesting sea products. This is extant in the now obsolete Louisiana Oyster fisheries. A thriving and unique culture is threatened by the closure of the oyster beds. Upbringing, culture, and family history now stand for nothing, whereas they were the fabric that held this part of the US together. The closure of oyster processing factories and the consternation that has filled the nation's maritime food chain do get media space because the knock on economic consequences have created multiplier effects that damage regional and national economies. Yet the media investigation stops short of examining the killing of centuries old cultures and ways of life.

The mantra of “It's the economy stupid” has never before been revealed as so much nonsense. There is no economy if there is not a culture to implement it. There is no post environment economy. The culture will not return while the oyster beds are dead. Whatever life they still hold will be fatally damaged by the clean up. Questions are not being asked about Corexit 9500, the dispersant used

abundantly to restrain the oil spill – over one million gallons of this poison. This chemical is outlawed in the UK in the event of an oil spill – as it kills everything in the marine ecosystem. How do we get off this mad carousel? Is there any equanimity or intelligent life to be found in decision makers? How about us - do we change our part as consumers in creating the demand for oil and oil products? Another deep question that CNN and FOX conveniently ignore. It is evident that we must stop, locate ourselves in the present moment, pause, and make different choices – examining our minds, consumption patterns and personal culpability in the creation of such a huge disaster. Guidelines are necessary. They can be found in the Mindfulness Trainings of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh – particularly the Fifth Training about mindful consumption. Here it is:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or any other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in such a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

It takes us right back to what we do with our minds. I apply this to walking meditation, taught to students and friends who come to Pine Gate Meditation Hall, where I have the privilege of being the resident Zen teacher. When we concentrate on our breath and focus on slow walking, we have a brilliant piece of engineering to quiet the mind and body and be present. When we add a third concentration – aware of how our feet touch the earth – we have a meditative practice designed for our times. We focus our mind on the mechanism of each foot touching the earth – heel, then ball of foot, then toe. We slow down even further and with our body – not our intellect or ego – we make a contract with Mother Earth to walk more lightly and leave a smaller footprint. We examine our consumption patterns and energy use and commit to decreasing the size of our ecological footprint. All this arises from walking with awareness. Conscious breath co-ordinates our steps as we notice how our feet touch the earth. The energy of wellbeing that arises from this practice is stronger than our habit energies and mental afflictions. And so the latter fall away. The insight and clarity that also arises guides us in the direction of what to do. Nobody requires a lecture from me about that. We know what to do. We know how to reduce our ecological footprint. We also know that taking care of the earth and the oceans takes care of ourselves. Begin it now, for the future is not some way ahead – it is shaped by the actions we take at this moment.

Freeing the Human Spirit in Canada's Prisons through Yoga/ Meditation Peggy Campbell

Why couldn't a prisoner's cell be like a monk's cell – a place of opportunity and renewal instead of a cage of punishment and despair? Zen practitioners experience that any circumstance is an opportunity to practice. To practice what? This moment – the only moment we have, the only moment where change can occur. This is the message, which volunteer yoga and meditation teachers bring to detainees through the organization "Freeing the

Human Spirit". (www.freeingspirit.com) Through bringing awareness to every breath and muscle during the yoga practice, the students and teacher settle the body. Then, through the continuous practice of bringing awareness back to the breath from the stories and mental wanderings that humans engage in, both teacher and student settle the mind. Herein lies freedom, even in the midst of incarceration.

The students we teach through "Freeing the Human Spirit", like all students, come from every walk of life, every degree of privilege and deprivation. The life of a prisoner, either the ones behind bars, or the ones walking the streets, is fraught with a sense of difficulty, of basic malaise. There is a constant litany of woe roiling the mind, causing anger and indescribable pain. Pain that seems unending and bound to spiral out of control. Desperate measures are needed – often drugs, alcohol, just to make it stop for a moment. There is no joy anywhere – birdsong and butterfly are blotted out by the bleakness of unremitting pain. How did it come to this? Where did we lose the happiness that must certainly be our birthright? For most, it isn't lost all at once but bleeds away as a slow unstaunched hemorrhage of blame and blindness. Blame and blindness are practiced until that seems to be the only way, until something happens – a word is spoken, a veil is lifted – even for only the tiniest of moments. In that tiny moment, another way presents itself and we are given the opportunity to turn around.

Some might play this bewitching game of peek-a-boo for quite a while – seeing the brightness, but practicing darkness. The practice we teach is a constant return to the moment, which, of course, has never left us! Every decision to take our seat is a decision to renew our efforts to live in the moment, to recognize that we can live and enjoy it! FTTHS goes into the prison every Sunday evening and every/other Thursday evening to practice this and it is truly a joy and a privilege to do so!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact FTTHS at www.freeingspirit.com.

8th Annual Friends for Peace Day, October 2, 2010 in Ottawa City Hall

Invitation

Friends for Peace - a coalition of fifty groups in Ottawa - has been building peace, planetary care and social justice since 2003. All money raised is donated to organizations actively making a difference in the world and in our city. www.friendsforpeace.ca Last year, we provided three \$1,000.00 donations to: the Nelson Mandela Children's Foundation in South Africa; the David Smith Youth Rehabilitation Centre in Ottawa; and the Morungatuny Refugee Camp in Uganda. The last donation enabled 10 families to re-settle with seed, tools and building materials. The 2010 Peace Grants will be awarded to Pakistan Flood Relief, Peace Camp Ottawa and the Healing Art Project of Minwaashin Lodge – an aboriginal women's centre in Ottawa.

Friends from all across the city present this event to provide the opportunity for the diversity of Ottawa to stand together for peace, social justice and planetary care – and to have a good time doing it. People can expect great entertainment, inter-faith action, activist speeches, interaction with dancers and musicians, good food, Silent Auction bargains and fellowship, while inspecting a showcase of concerned groups. Come and be part of the celebration. The 2010 theme is:

- COME OUT, CONNECT AND BE HEARD -

Building community to heal the world.

- Keeping Vision Alive
 - Elizabeth May - planetary care;
 - Daniel Stringer – founder of National Capital Peace Council

- Taking Action
 - Connect to others and projects;
 - Petition for Department of Peace.
- Celebrating – Great Entertainment, Silent Auction
 - teen stepdance sensations, African World Music, choirs, slam poetry, pipers, kirtan, drums and Moving Mysteries
 - Community and Activist Tables. Together we create a joyful way to peace, planetary care and social justice. It’s up to us.

*A rousing wake up call from Pipers for Peace began the day long celebration. The aboriginal women’s drum group from Minwaashin rooted the event in planet Earth. Koozma Tarasoff introduced a magnificent Leo Tolstoy exhibition and spoke eloquently about this pioneer of a culture of peace. Big Soul Project raised the roof. This Gospel Choir partnered with Friends for Peace to donate a Peace Grant to Pakistan Flood Relief. The biggest Silent Auction ever, raised sufficient funds for two further Peace Grants – to Peace Camp Ottawa and to Minwaashin Lodge for Aboriginal Women.

*Over \$5,000 was raised to continue the work of Friends for Peace. The day was an epicentre of intent and action – intense at times as people were moved to both tears and laughter. It was fun, poignant and direct. The intensity and joy rippled through the diversity – all generations, faiths and cultures in our northern city. Moving Mysteries led by the Sacred Dance Guild wove the generations and crowd together in the opening dance of the afternoon – all directors of Friends for Peace were on the dance floor. Young people were there – teen step dancers, Holy Trinity High School Rhythm and Blues band, university students. They seized the day, converging on the Connection Centre, which linked projects to people. This new initiative had a petition for a Department of Peace, a scroll full of citizen concerns for the government to pay attention to. Hand written on a parchment, to be delivered to Parliament Hill, where MP’s Paul Dewar and Tom Siksay will take it further.

*The force of the epicentre roared through the community and activist tables, Muslim families, Asian groups, elders, young folk, the volunteers – the diversity of Ottawa gathered, listened, danced, laughed, cried – and took home an unforgettable experience of hope and confidence.

*The day long event drew in over a thousand people and was filmed for CTV’s nightly newscast. Some came just for the morning and then stayed all day.

Results

OTTAWA, CANADA – Friends for Peace set aside a day each year to celebrate what we can do rather than bemoan the obstacles. In 2010 the response simply blew everyone away!!

Highlights of the day:

* Clive Doucet, mayoral candidate, not only danced a great number with Big Soul Project, he gave a stirring speech on Cities of Peace. A vision for Ottawa. Metis story teller – Jo Maple – recounted the fable of Hummingbird - “Doing the best I can.” Alex Cullen, Paul Dewar and other municipal and political figures were in attendance. The National Capital Peace Council were all there – to listen to founder Daniel Stringer receive a Peace Award and speak about down to earth peace projects. He is running for City Council in Kitchissippi Ward. Jen Hunter, a candidate for a federal riding in the next election talked about planetary care. Dr Ian Prattis asked the crowd if their light was fierce and were they ready for tomorrow’s child, not yet born. This child has difficult questions – “What did you do when there was still time to create a sustainable world?” “On your watch, was there intelligent life in humanity’s leaders and decision makers?” A resounding affirmative was delivered by the diversity gathered on this day.



FRIENDSforPEACE.ca

Toltec Prayer

Miguel Ruiz

Put the attention in your lungs
 Feel the pleasure of breathing.
 To breathe fulfills the biggest need of humanity.
 When we fulfill a need we feel pleasure.
 Feel that strong connection between
 your lungs and the air.

Just to breathe is enough to make you happy.
 You can always feel that pleasure of the strong
 communion between your lungs and the air.
 That communion is Love.
 The gift of Love is in the air you breathe.
 It fills all your being when you breathe with
 “awareness” in every cell of your body,
 in every emotion of your mind,
 in every piece of light that creates you.

Today, we ask Love to come to us.
 We offer ourselves, our eyes, our voice, our hands
 to share Love because we are ONE.
 From an electron to a star, from matter to spirit,
 From every emotion to the energy of light,
 Help us to love with no conditions.
 Help us to love ourselves just as we are,
 without judgement.
 Help us to accept everything the way it is,
 To love without conditions.

Love is changing the whole world.
 Love is reality and we are Love.

Seeking Integration: Part I

Bill Shields

Sustainable Living Ottawa West (SLOWest) is a very young grassroots network in the west end of Ottawa seeking to discover how to live in an environmentally sustainable, socially just and spiritually fulfilling way. Central to the vision of SLOWest is the integration of the inner and outer dimensions of our experience; the contemplative and the active; being and doing. The following is part one of an early discussion paper that we are using to initiate the development of a foundation for our work that will help us ground our actions in the deeper field of creativity that infuses all life.

Deepening the Possibilities

The goal of SLOWest is to build connections and initiate projects that will help move the communities of Ottawa West into an inspiring future – one that is different from what will emerge through business as usual with a bit of “sustainability” window dressing. The focus is practical. We want to move into action on specific projects and learn and adapt as we go rather than remaining in discussion.

But our success will depend both on what we do together, and how we engage with each other while doing it. People’s participation in SLOWest will only be truly ‘sustainable’ if they can contribute their unique ideas, talents and energy in ways that they find encouraging and energizing rather than depleting. This has to do with the quality of relationships.

Many organizations have developed and practiced skilled approaches to inter-personal and group dynamics. But once a task is introduced, with expectations, deadlines and accountabilities, there is a tendency to revert to fairly traditional ways of

interacting. Especially with work that engages people's passions, the excitement and energy can often override good communications and group skills.

So an important part of the work of SLOWest is to cultivate approaches that reflect the best of what has been learned about communication, the resolution of disagreements and the making of decisions. This relates to the concept collective intelligence, and seems to be one of the front lines of our evolution as a species – calling us to more consciously tap into the co-creative potential that has unfolded through the eons of Earth history into expressions of ever increasing complexity and beauty. This may be essential to arriving at new kinds of relationships with one another and the rest of life on Earth. As Einstein's observed "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them". In more prosaic language, creating innovative solutions to the complex challenges we face calls for us to be much more conscious and skilful in our collaborations.

Much will be learned by sharing experiences from the different working groups that emerge to develop and deliver projects. But the following guidelines and practices can provide a foundation for our approach.

Guidelines

The following guidelines for group work draw on several schools of thought for how groups of people can develop creative and sustainable collaborative relationships. If these guidelines have value, the demands of shared action - deadlines, limited resources, expectations - will not create barriers to the approach, but rather opportunities for the

practice to deepen and generate more innovative solutions.

- *Slow down:* Slow down from our habitual pace of interaction and take the time to be present to ourselves and each other. Ironically, slowing down in this way, can actually speed up the process of arriving at shared ideas and solutions.
- *Include the whole person:* Welcome all aspects of ourselves and each other in this work together - spirit, mind, heart and body. We want to be able to bring ourselves fully into this work together. Even when engaged in very practical work we want to make room for and include whatever is true for each of us.
- *Practice deep listening and curiosity versus judgement:* Be aware of our own experience in the present moment while also paying close attention to others and what is happening in the group. A collective agreement to be present to whatever arises, open to the full spectrum of experience and ideas, enhances the group's creativity and reduces the tendency to get bogged down. We undertake to listen to each other deeply, to let go of rehearsing our response or strategizing, to allow the other to speak without interruption and to notice our own experience while remaining curious versus judgemental.
- *Reflect the truth of our experience and appreciate differences/diversity:* Share what we are truly thinking and feeling at the time and appreciate expressed differences, even when they generate discomfort. There are no right and wrong experiences and we don't have to have the same experience to work together effectively. Healthy natural systems thrive on diversity. We avoid censoring ourselves when

we are thinking or feeling differently from others in the group and view differences as a creative part of the group's experience.

- *Get comfortable with the unknown:* Create space for not knowing and be cautious with certainty. We approach our work with a sense of humility, wonder and awe, curious about what might emerge and what we might learn together. When something is strongly felt it is shared openly but held loosely, as a piece of the puzzle rather than the whole picture.
- *Welcome disagreement:* Acknowledge that dissent, conflict and intensity are not dynamics to be suppressed. Being open to diversity and to hearing the truth of each other's experience can increase apparent levels of disagreement, dissent or even conflict within the group. We welcome these experiences as potentially holding something important for our work: an idea, perspective or feeling that will enrich our efforts if we are able to integrate it. By bearing with rather than avoiding intensity, we minimize the risk that feelings will go underground and undermine our collaboration.

The second part of this paper, which will be shared in the next issue of Pine Gate, suggests some practical ways so that active groups can manage projects and work with disagreements and conflict in ways that reflect these guidelines. Visit <http://sustainableottawawest.ning.com> for more information about SLOWest.

Review of Blessed Unrest

Susan Kehoe

Paul Hawken writes: 'the dawn of the 21st century has witnessed two remarkable developments in our history: the appearance of systemic problems that are genuinely global in scope and the growth of a worldwide movement that is determined to heal the

wounds of the earth with the force of passion, dedication and collective intelligence and wisdom'

With so many books to read and information to keep up with I thought I could get away with reading the inside cover overview, which is what one can do and get Hawken's thesis in a nutshell. However, I am very glad to have read the whole book for it has caught my imagination and energized my convictions.

I found it a relatively quick read despite the ecologic crisis that precipitated its unfolding for I was consistently buoyed up by the countless accounts, stories of those throughout the earth working diligently on behalf of Life.

For Paul Hawken it began with the almost causal collection of business cards, received after his various speaking tours. Returning home with a few hundred cards after being on the road. Over the course of years the number of cards mounted into the thousands- Hawken estimates the cards represent over 2 million organizations, mostly NGO, community and grassroots groups... all working toward ecological sustainability and social justice (2 sides of the same coin) It was his noticing with curiosity that grew into a hunch 'that something larger was afoot, a significant social movement that was eluding the radar of mainstream culture'.

'if you look at the science that describes what is happening on earth today and aren't pessimistic, you don't have the correct data. If you met the people in this unnamed movement and aren't optimistic, you haven't got a heart'.

The first 190 pages of Blessed Unrest is a very real and wonderful path through the highs and lows, the despair and excitement of what **is** happening out there now.

The next 112 pages; an annotated appendix not to be passed over; is a taxonomy of civil society organizations and is, according to Hawken, the

most complete listing of issues (and growing everyday) that need to be addressed to achieve a just and sustainable world.

Dip into the appendix and meet your neighbors, near and far...

Be encouraged, inspired, and have rekindled the fire for passionate action on behalf of the planet and the whole 'communion' of subjects' (Berry)

As David Suzuki says of the book – 'for all of us who are squirreling away in our own individual ways, it is inspiring to realize that millions of us can add up to an irresistible force. Read this book and shout hallelujah!'

We need imagination, conviction, curiosity and most of all we need one another!

Slowest (Sustainable Living Ottawa West) is one of the many 'co-herent, organic, self organizing groups, dedicated to change... so lets get on with 'making our lives a worthy expression of leaning into the light' (Lopez, in Blessed Unrest)

Sustainable Living at Pine Gate Carolyn Hill

Planting season arrives late in our northern clime. As the spring tulips fade the Japanese Peonies charge in with their fleeting beauty. They bloom for only a few weeks before their petals fall - a mantle for the earth. Stunningly gorgeous - large white petals with red and yellow stamens at the centre. Surrounded by the slowly opening crowd of purple irises round the ash tree. The dark purple and pale blue clematis then emerge trumpeting their grandeur until they give way to gladiolas, roses and black-eyed-Susans.

The last week of May is planting time here. Weeding, raking, spreading compost - getting ready for the summer burst of sub-tropical abundance. The wooden frames are placed in the back garden for the five varieties of beans to climb. Enough are harvested to last the household and neighbours through the next year. Tomatoes and green beans are canned, beets and small cucumbers are pickled.

The potato patch, surrounded by hostas, in the garden shade provides produce for a further year. Succulent swiss chard, romaine lettuce and arugula are parked in the bed on the east side of the garage along with other vegetables and flowers.

Architecture is added through the new Buddha Plaza between the potato patch and the garage. In the summer there are expeditions to pick berries - strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and blueberries. Half are frozen for the winter, the rest go into jams of delicious combinations. The apple tree and rhubarb patch fill in the gaps, as the sweet corn is purchased from local farmers, shucked and frozen for winter consumption.

By the time fall comes around - the cold storage cellar is bursting with canned, bottled and pickled abundance. After a day's work in the garden, our greatest pleasure is to sit on the front steps or on the back deck, simply basking in the joy of the garden. Watching bees, beetles and insects about their business; greeting the many bird visitors; waiting for the hummingbirds to arrive from the south. Talking and singing to the flowers and vegetables. When they cant stand our singing any more we play their favorite CD's - loud! The overhanging Manitoba maples and cedars were trimmed this year, so more light and heat can dance on the garden beds. The expanse behind the south end of the garage has been cleared for spaghetti and butternut squash. Mint, rosemary and thyme provide them with good company - a small herb garden without the quarrelsome basil plants. They are in solitary tubs elsewhere in the garden so their bad language reduces somewhat. Large tubs contain the rest of the herbs. Two large planters, overflowing with flowers, are on the edge of the deck surveying the beets, carrots and spinach.

The home of Pine Gate has also undergone a major eco-retrofit – solar panel to heat the hot water, low flush toilets, energy efficient furnace and wood burning fireplace, energy windows and doors, solar blinds on south facing windows, insulation and so on. The neighbours and sangha watching closely and enquire about cost, rebates and results – many

are following suit. Our money is where our mouth is, as this is a planetary care project right at the heart of Pine Gate sangha, which is also the heart of Friends for Peace.

A highlight of the retrofit for Ian was the rain barrel. He had always wanted one. Drawing on the experience of working as a plumber's apprentice on building sites he put in the necessary pipework to connect the barrel to the eaves on the house. Interesting bends close to the mouth of the barrel to see whether the rain would make a musical sound as it poured through. Then, the wait for the rain to come down. It took a while. A summer storm blew up and it poured – so Ian quickly put on a rainslicker, grabbed an umbrella and went out to listen to the rain. Coming off the roof into the eavestrough, down the gutter through the bends in the pipe into the rain barrel. And it did sing at the end of its journey. A little while later a neighbour came out of his backdoor and asked: "Ian, What are you doing?" Ian told him – "Listening to the water run off the roof into the eavestroughs, down the gutter into the rainbarrel to see if it would sing.

There was a long silence. Then the neighbour then said "Ian, you have to get a life!" Ian's reply – "This is my life." Five minutes later our neighbour came out with his rain slicker on and a big umbrella in hand and joined the experience. Subsequently, he also started a major eco-retrofit on his house!! We planted an apple tree on the front lawn, so that as the fruit ripens passersby and neighbours with their children may just pick them and eat them. There are many ripe fruits on the sangha tree, especially young people.

Ian's new book is coming on too. Once a draft is complete, we will travel in the fall to Northern Arizona and just sit with it for a while. See how well the four centuries of interconnected consciousness plays out. If Ian did not enjoy gardening so much, perhaps he would not write!

What Is Dharma Gaia?

Thomas Ellis

Tom is a Professor of English at Tidewater Community College, a practicing Buddhist and Gaian philosopher.

If someone asks me, "What is Dharma Gaia?" my short answer is as follows:

DHARMA is the Sanskrit word, the core concept of all religions rooted in the Indian subcontinent, which is etymologically defined as "that to which we adhere." It has many shades of meaning, which have changed and broadened throughout its history, and of course no one definition will be adequate, but another way of understanding it is that it simply designates "That that is." Above all, it is universal – not restricted to one tradition or ideology, but rather the truth principle reflected in all of them. And it cannot be grasped intellectually alone. For this reason, the Dalai Lama defines the Dharma as a principle, a precept, and a practice simultaneously.

GAIA is the Living Earth, understood in ancient times as a Myth, a Greek name for the primordial Earth Mother Goddess; in modern scientific terms as a model (developed in the 1970s and 80s by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis), but more broadly, as a metaphor for an understanding of humanity as a part of, rather than apart from, the natural world, and as a worldwide movement based on this new metaphor. Gaia is thus the outward manifestation of the Dharma, and hence the name Dharma Gaia, coined by Thich Nhat Hanh, is a bicultural pun on the Buddhist concept of Dharmakaya – the Body of the Dharma.

So what is this principle, precept and practice that the Dalai Lama refers to?

What follows is a digest of all the wisdom teachings I have ever encountered, boiled down to their essence. For these, I quote directly from some of my heart teachers and Bodhisattvas who have inspired me the most:

PRINCIPLE

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

PRECEPT

“Take care of everyone and abandon no-one. Take care of everything and abandon nothing.” – Lao Tzu

PRACTICE

“Breathe, Observe, Let Go.” – The Buddha
 “Be well, Do Good Work, Keep in Touch.” – Garrison Keillor
 Learn, Teach, Heal, Create. – me!

Well – I can't take complete credit here either, except for the word “heal”. The triad “Learn, teach and create” is one I learned from a would be guru I met in Oregon years ago, but I felt it was incomplete without another verb – so I added “heal.”

Mindfulness**Thay**

Extract from an interview with Melvin McLeod.

Mindfulness brings concentration. Concentration brings insight. Insight liberates you from your ignorance, your anger, your craving. When you are free from your afflictions, happiness becomes possible. How can you be happy when you are overloaded with anger, ignorance, and craving? That is why the insight that can liberate you from these afflictions is the key to happiness. There are many conditions of happiness that are present, but people don't recognize them because they are not mindful.

When body and mind are together, you are fully present. You are fully alive and can touch the wonders of life that are available in the here and the now. So you practice not only with your mind but with your body. Body and mind should be

experienced as one thing, not two. On that ground, you see that everything you are looking for is already there. Whether it is enlightenment, nirvana, liberation, Buddha, dharma, sangha, or happiness, it is right there. In fact, that is the only place, the only moment, where you can find these things. What I've been doing is presenting the teachings of original Buddhism in a Mahayana spirit. Mahayana Buddhism has a very open view, not restricted, and it is wonderful to study original Buddhism with that kind of spirit.

To stay up to date with the path that Thay is blazing there is now streaming video of his most recent dharma talks at <http://stream.pvweb.org>

The Most Direct Path**James Baraz**

What is so special about mindfulness? Of all the fifty-two mental factors listed in Buddhist psychology, mindfulness possesses a unique power. It weakens the unwholesome mind states that cause us suffering, such as attachment, aversion and confusion. And strengthens the wholesome mind states that lead to happiness, such as kindness, generosity and wisdom. It can even help us develop the penetrating awareness that opens the mind to full awakening. For me, it is the primary tool for working with life's difficulties.

I like Thich Nhat Hanh's suggestion of thinking of yourself like a mountain – strong, worthy of respect, here for any change in the weather system.

The key moment in the meditative process is the moment you find you've been wandering. How you respond to that fact determines how you will relate to meditation practice. The secret to skilful meditation is bringing your attention back with great patience and kindness.

Engaged Practice**Failsafe pgs 46 – 47**

At a retreat offered in Orlando, Florida, I was asked a question about rampant consumerism as opposed to living with mindfulness in everyday life. The

student placed his question within the framework of the troubled times we face, and asked if his mindfulness was enough. This was a good question. I paused for several minutes before replying and pointed out that the human mind, capable of monumental scientific achievements, has pitifully neglected itself to the extent that it is now out of control. This can no longer continue if we wish to be around to see the unfolding of the 21st century. Furthermore, his mindfulness was indeed enough but the question was – are there enough of us who are mindful?

This is the crux of an engaged spirituality whatever the tradition. It rests on Taming The Wild Mind that led us into the damaging patterns of consumption fuelling the corporate agenda that drives us. I indicated to him that mindfulness takes many forms in various spiritual traditions to increase the number of people committed to an ethical design for all of life. The mindfulness trainings in the 21st century are environmental ethics, reinforcing and supporting the development of a new mind.

The meaning of “mindfulness” is self evident – the trainings, practices and ceremonies that retrain the mind in the direction of ethics and responsibility. This is the “real” antidote for the sickness of our times and provides hope for the future. Also discernment about what is good for our selves, for our minds and the planet, and that which is not. The solution is not political or economic – they are secondary. The primary solution is spiritual and requires an environmental ethics based on spiritual tradition.

Thay in Vancouver 2011 – At the University of British Columbia

Details for registration, retreat and talks will be in the Winter 2011 edition of Pine Gate: Volume 10, Issue 1. Also check out the Plum Village website www.plumvillage.org



Taking Refuge in The Five Mindfulness Trainings

Ian Prattis

“Mindfulness is the root of all the methods that tame the mind.

First it focuses the mind. Then it eases the mind. Finally it is the luminous nature, beyond thought”.

Patrul Rinpoche

Where did the Mindfulness Trainings come from? They had to come from somewhere. There are three major causes and conditions that permitted their emergence. The first is the awakened mind of the Buddha; the second is the great skill of the Buddha as a teacher; the third is Thich Nhat Hanh’s insightful rewording of the Five Wonderful Precepts of the Buddha. In a language that would appeal to the consciousness of the 21st century, the Buddha’s mindfulness trainings were renewed, in tune with modern historical, socio-economic and cultural developments. So when we study and penetrate deeply into the mindfulness trainings we touch all three conditions, in particular the awakened mind of the Buddha. At the same time we also touch our potential to be similarly awakened.

With the Five Mindfulness Trainings the Buddha communicated in a very precise way the ethical and

moral basis of practice; of how to be with ourselves, others and with the planet and society at large. To be in touch with the Buddha's awakened mind enables us to take refuge in the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha - in a very deep way. Once we grasp the extraordinary qualities and understand the power of the energy created by the mindfulness trainings then something deep and very wholesome stirs in our hearts. From this initial experience the seeds of awakening are nurtured within store consciousness and distance is created between ourselves and negative actions.

Taking refuge allows us to transport our everyday reality with its disasters, joys, ups and downs, into the loving embrace of teachers such as the Buddha and Jesus. Their teachings provide instruments for practitioners to travel from the Historical dimension of daily life and be refreshed by touching deeply the Ultimate dimension of the awakened mind of the Buddha and other fully enlightened beings. Such awakened teachers are able to reflect the Ultimate dimension of Nirvana, the Kingdom of God, The Pure Land, yet they also refer to the Historical dimension of the everyday realities of their times and culture.

Taking refuge in the Dharma, practices, sutras and trainings brings to mind the pivotal exchange between Ananda and the Buddha. As the Buddha was preparing for his bodily death his faithful attendant Ananda put a number of questions to the Buddha on behalf of the monastic community. The Buddha had repeatedly encouraged his disciples not to take refuge in the person of the Buddha, but in the island of mindfulness within the self where the diligent practice of the mindfulness trainings would reveal their Buddha nature. Still Ananda had to ask: "Who will our teacher be when you are gone?" to which the Buddha replied "The Mindfulness Trainings," adding "They are your teacher even while I am alive."

Taking refuge in the Sangha brings the Buddha and the Dharma to life. Without the Sangha, the

Buddha and Dharma cannot evolve to be relevant to the suffering of our times, which is quite different from the times of the Buddha. In the latter part of his ministry, the Buddha took great care to reconstitute himself in terms of the sangha. If you wanted to truly touch the Buddha and Dharma you had to do so in the Sangha. They has repeatedly referred to sangha building as the noblest profession in the 21st century.

I am convinced more than ever before that the world needs a universal code of ethics. The Five Mindfulness Trainings fill this void. For me they are a guide and protector in moments of doubt, so that I see clearly and can take care of my own internal garbage. This is the only way to deal with the potential terrorist that lurks deep within everyone's consciousness. To unravel the insidious internal knots caused by generations of ancestral habits, created from ignorance, vengeance and separation – this is the work of the new revolutionary of the 21st century, transforming terror and violence first within themselves and then within the world. It is not a political or intellectual exercise, nor a matter of compromised treaties or ceasefires. It is an internal transformation of consciousness at the very core of our being. It takes mindfulness to do this and the Five Mindfulness Trainings provide the starting gate, a guidance system and a deep well of internal ethics to live by. This is why I do my very best to live by these trainings.

There is an energy to the trainings that comes directly from the awakened mind of the Buddha, which is continued through us. So that when a sangha collectively and diligently practices the five mindfulness trainings, an extraordinary energy emerges that uplifts everyone who is suffering. Taking Refuge in the trainings and three jewels is a joyful path. A vital part of the joy is engaged practice with a sangha, as that leads to confidence, new leadership and responsibility for the wider community. It is in the Sangha that the Ultimate dimension of the Buddha and Dharma truly comes

alive, as the feedback is from direct experience with dharma friends. As sangha members feel the fruits of practice from taking refuge, their awareness grows as their suffering is transformed. The sangha becomes a safe haven, a community of resistance where participants are free to explore deeply the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that is within. Using breath consciously, living the mindfulness trainings fully, practicing the guidance of the sutras enables the awakened mind of the Buddha within us to be touched. And so we transform. At this instance the existential realities of the sangha in the Historical dimension, by creating a Pure Land for transformation, cross over into the Ultimate dimension. The waves recognize that they are water. This is not a concept but a reality based on the experience of sangha practice. This is why I believe it will be sanghas creating Pure Lands that provide the basis for the next Buddha to manifest. Each sangha operates organically as a cell in the new manifestation of Divinity on Earth. This is a statement of practice and is our greatest gift. It enables us to live authentic lives and be free, at the same time ensuring that a future is possible.

I wrote about this in “Guidelines to Re-Crete Our World” – Chapter Seven of *The Essential Spiral*. As did Thay in his book *For a Future To Be Possible*. Both works elaborated on the foundation provided by the Five Mindfulness Trainings to re-create our world.

Thoughts From an Island Refugee

Yves Desnoyers

After having received the transmission of the Five Mindfulness Trainings in August, 2010 at Pine Gate Meditation Hall from Dharmacharya Ian, I thought I would share my thoughts and personal experiences with you.

Many months ago in the Sangha, Ian had shown us a simple yet effective way to actively meditate, which many of you know as walking meditation. It

essentially consists of being fully alive and receptive to the present moment, fully engaged in the act of walking, connecting the heel, the foot, and the toes to the ground before lifting the foot up again. The process repeats itself, much like the waves of the sea. Even though this might seem as a repetitive process, it really isn't - if one is truly present, no two footsteps are the same; the right foot comes in contact with the soil for one step, while the left may come into contact with a small pebble instead, and so on. After having practiced walking meditation within the sangha, I thought I should integrate it within my daily life. Therefore, the following day, as I was taking a brisk walk with my dog, a thought came to me that I should practice the walking meditation. And so I did. My dog must've wondered why we were suddenly walking so slowly, but like many dogs, she quickly adapted to the new, albeit slower, pace. Walking in meditation, I began to realize how everything suddenly became alive around me - my senses were picking up the smell of fresh-cut grass, and I was aware of the sounds my feet would make when they touched the ground. “Heel, foot, toe”, I kept telling myself as I smiled with contentment.

I continued with this daily practice, always noticing that the path I took everyday was never really the same; people were there one day, and absent the next. It rained one day, and was windy the next. What was steady in a world in constant flux, was my breath and my practice - those were my only constants. Then one day, something very interesting happened - I was walking past a patch of wild grass on a sunny, windy day, and became aware of a song that the wind was playing as it would pass through a patch of wild grass, much like the wind that enters a flute and is forever transformed by the hollowed reed. I could hear the gentle rustling of the fronds of grass as the sun danced on the tips, and I smiled as I watched Nature's spectacle in the oddest of places. I was mesmerized with the present moment, having never noticed this part of the landscape, which had always

been there for me but that I, paradoxically, had not been there for it. With this in mind, I continued my walking meditation that day, and the days that followed. Every time I went by that spot, the wild grass, which had grown to be fairly high, always greeted me, every time in a different way. It was a reminder for me of that initial moment. And then, about two weeks ago, something happened. I went by the spot and noticed that someone had razed that patch of grass, only to leave what seemed to be dried up stalks of yellow straw. A moment of sadness went through me as I remembered the song of the green blades of grass dancing in the wind, a song that would now be no more. Still, “heel, foot, toe”, I reminded myself as I went by the patch, mindful of what is now, and aware of my breath and senses. Then, at that very moment, my nose picked up a pleasant smell, which was a waft of cut grass mixed with sweet-grass and clover. The grass had never disappeared, it simply had transformed. Much like a paper burning transforms into ash, the grass had transformed entirely, and instead of me perceiving it with my eyes, I was now perceiving with my nose. I then pondered what these blades of grass had to teach me, and I gathered that life is much like this - a blade of grass that, one day, is cut, and transforms into something else.

In early August, I chose to receive the transmission of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, which has been an affirmation for me to live a mindful life. It has been a wonderful experience, which has deepened the colour of my experiences in mindfulness, such as the one I’ve shared with you. I thank all those who were present and who wished to attend the ceremony. So I draw this to a close - I hope that you’ve enjoyed reading about these experiences in mindfulness as I have in sharing them with you.

Yves is from Prince Edward Island. He received the dharma name: Gentle Expansion of the Source.



Consciousness

Ian Prattis

Consciousness has many levels. The deepest level is known as store consciousness – and it does exactly what the name implies. It stores everything – all our experiences, the information taken in by our senses, the memories of our ancestors and species. It contains absolutely everything; all possible mental formations, the darkest elements of ignorance, hate and greed as well as the enlightened mind of the Buddha, the Love of Jesus. The seeds of suffering passed on by our parents, inherited from our ancestors – are also stored without discrimination, as seeds of potential. These seeds become reality when we activate them with our thoughts and intentions or allow the triggers from life circumstances to do so. This all lies latent within us, buried, veiled and hidden. It is like the hard drive of a computer, hidden behind the screen, storing all the programs that are downloaded. This primary level of consciousness shapes our lives because we feed off it. In the teachings, store consciousness is considered to be the ground of definition for how our body, mind and environment manifest.

Then there is mind consciousness – our everyday rationality engaging with what it thinks reality is. The mind consciousness is the apparatus that makes sense of, and orders, the information pouring through the senses. So mind interprets the

information coming through the senses - sight, sound, smell, touch, perceptions. However, to complicate matters there is another level of consciousness that is absolutely key for our understanding. In store consciousness, the storage of seeds of potential that have characteristics of suffering, hate, anger, fear, ignorance and shame – the unwholesome seeds – glom together as an energy to form another level of consciousness called *Manas*. This is a distorting, delusional level of consciousness based on suffering and ignorance. It corresponds to ego. It seeks to grasp and possess things, power, fame and celebrity, regarding itself as separate whereas the reality is its integration with all other levels of consciousness.

To maintain this sense of separateness, *manas* props up its importance with the acquisition of more and more “stuff.” This is hidden under false perceptions of reality. Does this sound all too familiar? If not, just turn on the daily news. But here is the kicker - *manas* regulates mind consciousness. This means that how we interpret the world through our senses takes its cue from a distorting, delusional level of consciousness that runs the mind. Our view of reality is always skewed and off line while *manas* holds sway over the mind. The energy of *manas* is fostered by our dysfunctional habits that create suffering. It comes from our cravings, attachments and delusions, which find their form in how we speak, act and think. It is the energy of fear, addiction, hatred and desire and it never shuts up.

This state of suffering and delusional affairs remains in place until mind consciousness decides to do something about it. Mind can choose to switch on the light of mindfulness practice - healing and transforming practices based on meditation. So the mind brings in concentration and insight, making meditation processes a daily and valid option in everyday life. This is in radical contrast to being run on automatic pilot by *manas* as the generator. The mind is now choosing which seeds of potential from store consciousness to nurture and bring into awareness. Mind consciousness, instead

of being enslaved by *manas*, now becomes like a fresh memory stick creating new programs and concentrations. It delivers them as downloads to the hard drive of store consciousness. In other words – re-written programs replace the old worn tracks that only cultivate *manas*. We dance to a different music. All levels of consciousness are malleable so they can be reshaped by human concentration. Mindfulness is a necessary food for the reshaping. Its application can bring about an end run round *manas* by changing and defusing the programs and seeds that enabled *manas* to come into being in the first place. Thanks to this freshness and discerning concentration and insight, we can retrain the mind with every act of meditation. We start to come into alignment with universal energy of a higher order and take the hand of the Buddha.

Declaration of Interdependence (Suzuki Foundation)

This heartfelt prayer for the planet expresses our values as an organization. By Tara Cullis, David Suzuki, Raffi Cavoukian, Wade Davis, Guujaaw and others.

THIS WE KNOW

We are the Earth, through the plants and animals that nourish us.
 We are the rains and the oceans that flow through our veins.
 We are the breath of the forests of the land, and the plants of the sea.
 We are human animals, related to all other life as descendants of the firstborn cell.
 We share with these kin a common history, written in our genes.
 We share a common present, filled with uncertainty.
 And we share a common future, as yet untold.
 We humans are but one of thirty million species weaving the thin layer of life enveloping the world.
 The stability of communities of living things depends upon this diversity.

Linked in that web, we are interconnected – using, cleansing, sharing, and replenishing the fundamental elements of life.

Our home, planet Earth, is finite; all life shares its resources and the energy from the sun, and therefore has limits to growth.

For the first time, we have touched those limits. When we compromise the air, the water, the soil, and the variety of life, we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present.

THIS WE *BELIEVE*

Humans have become so numerous and our tools so powerful that we have driven fellow creatures to extinction, dammed the great rivers, torn down ancient forests, poisoned the earth, rain and wind, and ripped holes in the sky.

Our science has brought pain as well as joy; our comfort is paid for by the suffering of millions.

We are learning from our mistakes, we are mourning our vanished kin, and we now build a new politics of hope.

We respect and uphold the absolute need for clean air, water, and soil.

We see that economic activities that benefit the few while shrinking the inheritance of many are wrong. And since environmental degradation erodes biological capital forever, full ecological and social cost must enter all equations of development.

We are one brief generation in the long march of time; the future is not ours to erase.

So where knowledge is limited, we will remember all those who will walk after us, and err on the side of caution.

THIS WE *RESOLVE*

All this that we know and believe must now become the foundation of the way we live.

At this turning point in our relationship with Earth, we work for an evolution: from dominance to partnership; from fragmentation to connection; from insecurity to interdependence.

The Buddha Is Still Teaching

This new book edited by Jack Kornfield, published by Shambhala, is a necessary step to understand that we are indeed continuations of the Buddha and have to update his teachings to bring them to bear on the causes and conditions of suffering in our time. When the Buddha set in motion the wheel of Dharma, he knew that the teaching he gave was inexhaustible – that every future generation would find its own skilful ways to convey it to the hearts and minds of those ready to hear it. *The Buddha Is Still Teaching* is testimony to the fulfillment of that promise today. Selections from highly regarded contemporary Buddhist teachers bring the dharma eloquently to life for us in our own time, place and culture. They demonstrate that two and a half millennia have done nothing to diminish the freshness of the Buddhist teachings, or their universal applicability to our lives.

Contributors include: AjahnChah, Joko Beck, Sylvia Boorstein, Tara Brach, Pema Chodron, the Dalai Lama, Ram Dass, Mark Epstein, Norman Fischer, Natalie Goldberg, Joseph Goldstein, Dilgo Khyentse, Jack Kornfield, Noah Levine, Stephen Levine, Sakyong Mipham, Sharon Salzburg, Susuki Roshi, Robert Thurman, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Tulku Thondup.

To learn more about the author, visit his website at www.jackkornfield.org

Mother's Day

With thanks to Reverend Michel Dubord, minister at St John's Anglican Church, who presented this story in a sermon.

Mrs Harris had three sons who had all done very well for themselves, though they were still somewhat competitive. For Mother's Day this year the eldest son, a wealthy lawyer, bought her a huge new house and boasted of this to his two siblings. The second brother, a rich realtor, not to be outdone

bought her a Mercedes limousine with a chauffer so his mother could be transported anywhere she liked. The youngest son, an IT millionaire said to his brothers – “I have got mother something that beats your house and your car into a corner. I have bought her a speaking parrot that knows the bible by rote. Mother loves the bible and with her failing eyesight cannot read – but she can just say John, Chapter Two, Verse 6 and the parrot will recite it to her.”

Mrs Harris thanked each of her three sons for their kindness. Several weeks later she wrote a letter to each one of them. To the lawyer son – she wrote that though the new house was beautiful it was too big and difficult to clean and she preferred to return to her simple home. To the realtor son – she wrote that the Mercedes was wonderful but the chauffeur smoked and was rude and as she did not drive – the car should go back to the dealer. To her youngest IT millionaire son she wrote in much more affectionate terms. Dear Johnny – she wrote – you know exactly what I like. The chicken was delicious!!

Many Hands

Jody Kessler

This song, composed by Jody, compliments The Five Contemplations that follow it.

On this plate, there are many hands,
 The hands that sowed the seeds,
 The hands that ploughed the land.
 The hands that worked the harvest
 and brought it to the stands.
 Yes, on this plate are many hands.

In this bowl, are sun and rain and air
 The garden soil and all the tiny creatures that live there.
 A delicate balance of beings great and small,
 Yes, in this bowl we have them all.

In this meal are many hearts and souls
 Some may be our families who served it in our bowls,
 Some may be migrant workers who we may never know,
 Who can't afford to buy the food they grow.

In this room, there are many hands,
 Let's join them altogether in a circle if we can
 And in this sacred silence let there be gratitude
 For the many hearts and hands that made this food...
 For the many hearts and hands that made this food.

THE FIVE CONTEMPLATIONS

THIS FOOD, THIS DAY, AND THIS SANGHA ARE GIFTS OF THE WHOLE UNIVERSE – THE EARTH, THE SKY, THE STARS, NUMEROUS LIVING BEINGS AND MUCH HARD WORK

MAY WE RECEIVE THEM WITH STABILITY, JOY, AND FREEDOM, AND SO BE WORTHY OF THEM

MAY WE TRANSFORM OUR UNSKILLFUL STATES OF MIND, ESPECIALLY OUR GREED, AND LEARN TO EAT IN MODERATION, AND LOVE IN ABUNDANCE

MAY WE KEEP OUR COMPASSION ALIVE BY EATING IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE REDUCE THE SUFFERING OF LIVING BEINGS, PRESERVE OUR PLANET AND MITIGATE THE PROCESS OF GLOBAL WARMING

WE ACCEPT THIS FOOD, THIS DAY, THESE FRIENDS, SO WE MAY NOURISH OUR SISTERHOOD AND BROTHERHOOD, STRENGTHEN OUR SANGHA AND NOURISH OUR IDEAL OF SERVING ALL BEINGS

Lazy Days of Summer 2010 Margery Street

Each summer at Pinegate the Sangha has an opportunity to explore other traditions. Members of the Sangha invite guests to share their experiences on the spiritual path. We see how each person has combined the elements of song, dance, chanting, meditation, and reflection and their roots to create a unique spiritual framework. For me, it has been an opportunity to reflect on how much we have in common and how many ways we can arrive in the same place

This year's program included Paul Fauteux, who gave us a taste of NVC (Non Violent Communication), which he has studied with Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD. He showed us how words themselves reveal much about how we approach each other. Even in discord and misunderstanding we can employ the Fourth Mindfulness Training in our response. Theda Pheonix brought her singing bowls, her guitar and voice and engaged us in a journey to find our own voices. We worked in pairs to overcome our shyness and sing from our hearts. The results deeply touched us. Yves' song to Ian's star socks may be on YouTube in the near future! Dodie introduced us to Journey Dance after an extended session of Walking Meditation with Ian. Danny Mauro took us through the combination between music and mind. Ian began the summer session with a dharma talk on The Five Great Elements and Global Crises

Peggy Campbell shared her experience of bringing meditation and yoga to troubled women in the prison system. It is humbling to realize how rich our experience is and how even in prison there can be peace for the soul. The Sangha also participated in the blessing of baby Sophia. Barb and Pema, their family and friends celebrated the miracle of their daughter's birth. We welcomed Sophia with prayers from the Tibetan tradition, sacred water and a willow branch. Sophia blessed us all with her

presence and nursed at her mother's breast as children have done for thousands of years, reminding us of our connections to our ancestors. Bob and Marlene Neufeld came to share The Sufi Way. We were introduced to Hazrat Inayat Khan who brought the Sufi message to North America early in the last century. Hazrat said: "I come from a perfect source and I am bound for a perfect goal. The light of the perfect Being is kindled in my soul. I love, move and have my being in God; and nothing in the world, of the past or the present, has power to touch me if I rise above it all." We prayed and chanted and danced together in a message of Love, Harmony, and Beauty. The evening was deeply moving for all.

Michael McCulloch brought his friends, guitars, slides, songs and poems to share his experience of the Morungatuny Refugee Camp in Uganda. We heard about children sucking on limes after a soccer game because there isn't enough clean water to drink. Michael talked about how our donation from Friends for Peace Day 2009 helped many families in the camp return to their homes and begin the process of rebuilding their lives. Our dollars go a lot further in Uganda and people are grateful for the "helping hand" from Pine Gate.

And on it went all summer long in a dazzling feast of talent while making new friends. Carolyn introduced us to the Six Healing Sounds Qi-Gong; Michael and Yves committed to the Five Mindfulness Trainings transmission, reminding us of the basis of our practice together; Ian conducted a powerful and deep shamanic healing journey and Julie's sacred drum circle was a resounding finale to the Lazy Days. Full of richness – broadening the practice that takes place in Pine Gate Meditation Hall and bringing forth new leadership in the sangha. Now, that is very exciting to witness!

Lazy Days of Summer are anything but at Pine Gate. They are an opportunity to re-connect with other traditions to broaden our personal horizons and deepen our commitment to practice.

Pine Gate's Lazy Days of Summer Program 2010

Thursday June 3: 5 Great Elements and Global Crises – Dharmacharya Ian
 Saturday June 5: First Saturday – dharma talk and pot luck vegetarian supper
 Thursday June 10: Daniel Mauro – Music and Mind, Laughter and Spirituality
 Thursday June 17: Journey Dance with Dodie Sobreto
 Thursday June 24: Freedom Through Song – with Theda Phoenix, Healing Voice Artist

Thursday July 1: Canada Day – No Sangha. Enjoy Fireworks on Parliament Hill!
 Thursday July 8: Freeing The Human Spirit – Peggy Campbell on Meditation in prisons
 Thursday July 15: Baby Blessing Ceremony for Barbara and Pema's baby daughter Sophia
 Thursday July 22: The Sufi Way – Bob & Marlene Neufeld.
 Thursday July 29: Meditation, Music and Slides – Morungatuny Refugee Camp in Uganda – with Michael McCulloch

Thursday Aug 5: Six Healing Sounds Qi-Gong – with Carolyn
 Thursday Aug 12: Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission Ceremony
 Thursday Aug 19: Shamanic Healing Journey with Dharmacharya Ian
 Thursday Aug 26: Drum Circle with Julie Tierney
 Sunday Aug 29: Sweat Lodge Ceremony with Roy Barnes

Into The Future Meditation

This meditation is adapted from Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (p 142 –143). Sit quietly and have a notebook and pen close at hand, as you will need to write at the end of the meditation. Bring your attention to the in-breath and the out-breath. Just be aware of how your breath

comes in and out. Do this for ten breaths until you settle into a calm. Now breathe in with awareness of your total body, and as you breathe out smile to your body with gladness. Do this for ten breaths. **(Pause)**

Now breathe in and out and imagine that you are in your favorite place on the planet, whatever that may be - by a waterfall, shopping in a vegetable market, sitting in an outdoor café, or standing in the silence of a forest. Feel your happiness grow as you breathe in and out ten times. **(Pause)**

Now imagine that you are moving into the future, through the first decade of the new century, then the next decade until you are in the middle of the twenty first century – 2050. You are still in your favorite place. It has not changed much, neither have you - you are just older – a true elder. As you sit there you have the knowing that the crises of the twenty first century have been resolved. There are no more high school murders, world hunger is not there and the institutions that brought devastation and cruelty to the planet have changed. Know also that you and your friends played a major part in this change. **(Pause)**

As you sit in your favorite place, a young child – tomorrow's child - approaches you. This child comes and stands before you and places her hands together and bows respectfully to you. He has heard about you in legends and songs, about what you and your friends did to turn the world away from disaster. She addresses you respectfully:

O grandmother, O grandfather what was it like in the past to live in a cruel and polluted world? What was it like to know that 40,000 children died every day from starvation, that whole nations of people were bombed to death? How did you feel?

Keep your eyes closed and remember this question. It is written down for you and you can refer back to it at the end of the meditation. **(Pause)** Now the child asks a second question:

O grandfather, O grandmother what was it that you and your friends did to change the world? Tell me about the small things you did as well as the big things you did.

Keep your eyes closed and remember this question. Know that it is written down for you. **(Pause)** The child asks you a final question:

O grandmother, O grandfather where did you and your friends find the strength to do what you did? How could you keep going?

Keep your eyes closed and remember this question. It is already written down for you. **(Pause)** See that the child is now ready to leave. As she starts to go back to her family, she turns and smiles to you and bows once with her hands clasped before her, very gracefully she bows. And she says:

Thank you my grandfather, thank you my grandmother.

You watch her go and you feel such gratitude. Tears may come to your eyes. Sit for a while, silently in your favorite place, just bring your awareness to your in-breath and out-breath. **(Pause)**

Now travel back in time from 2050 to the present moment, to where you are now sitting. Take several deep breaths in and out and be here in the present. Open your eyes, pick up your pen and write down your replies to the three questions asked by the little child. Do not edit anything, just write down what arises from inside you. Take your time doing this. If you are doing this meditation in the company of friends, share your writing in small groups of two or three persons. Put the salient points up on a large chart so that the entire company can share everyone's journey into the future. The chart can then become the focus for further discussion as you realize that all these understandings are already within you.

Freshness at Pine Gate – Opening Flowers

Pine Gate sangha practices engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. There is a Fall Study session from September to December, a Winter Study session from January to May, and a Lazy Days of Summer session from June to August. The summer session provides an opportunity for the special interests of sangha members to find a forum for appreciation. Topics and practices are brought forward from different expressions of healing and meditation, broadening our knowledge and appreciation of different traditions as well as deepening our practice with Buddhist sutras and ceremonies.

The sangha, located in the west end of Ottawa, had very modest beginnings. Inaugurated in 1997 following Ian's return from teaching meditation in India, early gatherings featured Ian, his wife Carolyn, and their pets – Nikki the dog and Lady the cat. Since then the sangha has grown, and presently has over 250 members on the e-mail list. In the summer of 2001 major renovations took place to the lower level of Ian and Carolyn's home. A new meditation hall emerged from the dust and knocked down walls - the Pine Gate Meditation Hall - named after Thich Nhat Hanh's story in the book: *The Stone Boy and Other Stories*. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh provided a gift of calligraphy, naming The Pine Gate Meditation Hall. This now hangs on the wall for all to see. The new meditation hall has become a source of sanctuary for many friends.

The practice of mindfulness (non-action) is to encourage action to emerge from deep understanding and compassion. Pine Gate has a major commitment to social justice, peace and environmental issues, and to mindfulness practice in schools and the workplace. The sangha provides the nucleus for a city wide coalition – Friends for Peace. The engaged nature of sangha practice is a defining feature of Pine Gate sangha.

Our engagement with society and the environment rests on our quality of being. When that quality is rooted in stillness and mindfulness there is a different ground for subsequent actions. We simply go home to ourselves, to our true nature. We are very active in this way and bring harmony to those we interact with. The most significant interaction is with our true nature. To connect to its boundless quality in daily life, and then connect to others and the world in the same way is surely the ticket to ride.

Pine Gate – the Sangha journal – is published on line three times per year and is available at www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm The resident teacher is Dharmacharya Ian Prattis – True Body of Wisdom. He is a poet, scholar, peace and environmental activist. At Carleton University in Ottawa he taught courses on Ecology, Symbols, Globalization and Consciousness. Now retired, he has completed two trilogies with his book *Failsafe: Saving the Earth From Ourselves* as the mid point. This is a life work writing him. Ian encourages people to find their true nature so that humanity and the world may be renewed. He has trained with Buddhist, Vedic and Shamanic Masters.

The regular study session takes place each week on Thursdays, 7.00pm – 9.00pm, at Pine Gate Meditation Hall. On the First Saturday of each month, 5.00pm – 7.30pm, there is a monthly pot luck supper preceded by a dharma talk. Other activities include hikes, sweat lodges, Days of Mindfulness, Retreats, pilgrimages and other community events. Periodic classes of Qi-Gong are offered – Standing Qi-gong with Carolyn and Bamboo Stick Qi-gong with Ian. For a current schedule please email iprattis@cyberus.ca.

Pine Gate Meditation Hall is in the lower level of Ian and Carolyn's home at 1252 Rideout Cr, Ottawa, ON, K2C 2X7.

Directions: In Ottawa take the Queensway to Woodroffe Avenue South exit; proceed to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (2nd set of lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the crescent round to 1252. Lit up with Christmas lights in winter and with dazzling flower beds in summer.

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The Small God Limited Dharma Syndrome Ian Prattis

The *small-god-limited-dharma* syndrome is painfully pertinent for North American spirituality at this time. Bernard Law, erstwhile Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston may be remembered for the ultra conservatism he introduced and propagated throughout the Roman Catholic Church in America. At one time seen as a natural successor to Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Law presented a wrecking ball to the reforms set in motion by the Second Vatican Council. This ultra conservative shift torpedoed the engaged agenda of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' conference. This was diverted away from peace and social issues into a doctrinal conservatism that was anti feminist at best, at worst it provided complicity and cover-up for the sexual misconduct of the Catholic clergy.



Dr. Baars, a Catholic psychiatrist from Minnesota, prepared a report for the 1971 Synod of Bishops at the Vatican. He stated clearly the preponderance of “psychosexual immaturity” in 1500 priests whose records he had meticulously studied. His conclusions and warnings in 1971 were startling to the Vatican Synod of Bishops – they feared its challenge and totally suppressed it. In his 1971 report Dr. Baars pointed out in crystal clear fashion that there was a safety net within the Roman Catholic Church of only 15% of all priests in Europe and America. He meant by this, that only 15% of the clergy at that time were stable and sound in terms of emotional development, the rest were psychosexual time bombs waiting to explode. Although Dr. Baars died in 1981 his work is now surfacing in the 21st century providing evidence that the culpability of the church hierarchy extends to the uppermost reaches of the Vatican.

How can anyone grow spiritually under the yoke of this kind of oppression? It is not only in the United States that the church hierarchy is being held to account. In Canada, the conservative religious elite who controlled the Residential School System for aboriginal children provided a license for physical, sexual and emotional abuse of native children who had been forcibly removed from their families. This is perhaps the blackest part of Canada’s history and it is not yet over. While the schools have all been closed, there are class action lawsuits against the churches responsible for the abuse of children, which may have the lasting effect of several churches in Canada disappearing after they file for bankruptcy.

Conservatism and fundamentalism are replete in other religions that are part of the 21st century North American spiritual landscape. It is not that one religious tradition is more prone to abuse and oppression than any other – it is simply that the spectre of conservatism and fundamentalism provides the causes and conditions for abuse and oppression to flourish as a consequence of the *small-god-limited-dharma* syndrome.

Conservatism and fundamentalism are not specific to any particular zone of time and space. In the early days of Buddhism it took the brilliance and insight of the lay practitioner Vimalakirti to expose the limitations of exclusive monasticism. Furthermore the doctrine of a limited path of practice came under his withering fire. None of the Buddha’s disciples could withstand the full force of Vimalakirti’s insightful brilliance.

Vimalakirti put conservatism within early Buddhism under such a fierce attack that a new form of sutra emerged – the Mahayana Sutras. They endeavor to reveal the best things in the Buddhist tradition, to manifest the flowers that have not had a chance to bloom due to the monastic community’s conservatism. At the same time he opened wide the generous teachings of the Buddha so that ALL of the Buddha’s followers – lay and monastic – could participate in the same practice. Furthermore, he made it clear that all practitioners could experience for themselves the full fruit of practice - to awaken to the Buddhahood within.

The conservative base of Islamic fundamentalism so distorts the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed that it becomes frightening how discourses from an awakened mind can be so manipulated to control, discriminate and oppress. Fundamentalist Islam has replaced Marxism as the predominant creed for those who feel alienated and dispossessed. As most of the globe qualifies with these characteristics, the distortion of Islam in the hands of fundamentalists can readily recruit soldiers and suicide bombers anywhere for its conveniently defined *jihad*. What is forgotten in the process is that the term *jihad* originally referred to an individual’s engagement with his own spiritual darkness within. Just as the excesses of Marxism in the early 20th century, particularly under Stalin, made corpses and victims of millions, so may fundamentalist Islam do the same for the early part of the 21st century. That is, until it is challenged and rethought by “Vimalakurtis” emerging from within Islam.

Conservatism and fundamentalism provide a license for oppression and create victims, all in the name of a different God – a small god - that has no resemblance to the teachings of Jesus, the Buddha and the Prophet Mohammed. Their teachings are in fact betrayed by fundamentalism. It is all a pernicious, often undetected, manifestation of the human ego searching for personal power and control, forgetting the reality of spiritual depth, which is the true *jihad*. The ego-laden spirituality of a small god is a dead end everywhere for anyone's spiritual journey. It is a brick wall that brings the meditative journey to an abrupt halt, as artifice, distortion and expediency become the attributes of faith rather than that of awakening and oneness with God. For progress along the path of understanding we require a spiritual tradition that is alive and expansive, relevant to the modern world through its ability to address current issues of suffering.

Thich Nhat Hanh fearlessly adds to this stream of consciousness by touching on the miracle of impermanence, and showing that living organisms grow and do not remain the same. In his investigation of dharma in the twenty first century, he made it clear that the Buddha during his life span and ministry always continued to grow and evolve. The Buddha practiced diligently and was very much alive, always fresh. With the Buddha's passing, the dharma continued to evolve, as the dharma itself is organic and alive. Such growth is possible under conditions of openness and generosity. Thich Nhat Hanh's gift of living dharma to the modern world is through the practice of mindfulness in everyday life. This evolved into the form of Engaged Buddhism taught by Thich Nhat Hanh, whereby he actualizes the teachings of the Buddha to be pertinent to twenty first century realities of suffering. And so Buddhism is vivified, alive and vibrant in the new millennium. Ajahn Buddhassa, a noted Thai Buddhist master, provided sound advise for dharma teachers in the West. He encouraged them to be both very radical and very conservative.

“Conservative” applies to respecting the Buddha's teachings as a precious jewel in order to convey the true essence of it to new cultures. The “radical” agenda is the task of communicating these teachings so that they are useful for Westerners in the twenty first century. This task requires great skill and deep experience of everyday life in the West – an endeavour that must also take care not to distort the essence of what the Buddha communicated.

This article is an excerpt from Ian's forthcoming book: Keeping Dharma Alive