



# Pine Gate

---

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

Vol. 5 Issue 3: Fall 2006

---

## Table of Contents

<b>FAILSAFE: Gaia and Science Part 1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Life: A Walking Meditation</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Ocean Waves</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Buddha as Ecopsychologist</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Peace Prayer Day 2006</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Sr. Truc Dieu</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Lazy Days of Summer 2006</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Letter to a Suicide Bomber</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>You Are Not My Enemy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Letter to the President</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>This Day is This Day</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Beautiful Flower</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Autobiography</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>My True Job in Life</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Transformation</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Nikki 1991 – 2006</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Talks &amp; Retreats-Dharmacharya Ian Prattis</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PINE GATE SANGHA FALL STUDY</b>	
<b>SESSION: September – December 2006</b>	<b>15</b>

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 provides dharma talks and teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. His wife, Carolyn, teaches a regular Qi-Gong class at Pine Gate Meditation Hall as an introduction to mindfulness practice. The Pine Gate Sangha welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.

## **FAILSAFE: Gaia and Science Part 1 Ian Prattis**

*This is the first part of a summary of a new book, completed in Plum Village this summer.*

*Part 2: Teachings of the Buddha will appear in the next Pine Gate, Winter 2007 edition.*

In *Revenge of Gaia* (2006) James Lovelock extends the impeccable logic that produced the Gaia Hypothesis to argue that the planetary control system, which has worked to maintain conditions suitable for human life, is now working against us. The dependent variable of temperature rise is now a product of this control system and implies that the interconnecting feedback systems will intensify and quickly place the situation beyond human control. The evidence for this is grim. The removal of the snow and ice cover from the sub-arctic tundra permits the heat of the sun to be absorbed by the Earth rather than 90% of it being reflected back into space. The huge and imminent release of methane gas from the exposed tundra so accelerates global warming that this alone is a major tipping point. The myriad interconnecting set of feedback loops that constitute Gaia all amplify temperature

increase in a manner that is non-linear.

In *The Essential Spiral* I coined the phrase “Failsafe in Consciousness” (2002) to describe how consciousness expansion will be held in abeyance by human wilful ignorance – a cultivated ignorance about better knowledge - until the global ecological situation deteriorates to a breaking point. This will then act as a catalyst, penetrating such ignorance and activating consciousness so it is propelled into expansion, deliberation and change. This apparent naïve view requires more support than I provided in the 2002 work, but I must be very blunt about the context of current ecological, social and psychological crises. There is an external environmental pollution crisis on the planet because there is an internal pollution crisis in humankind. In addition to the waste from industrial pollution there is the suffering from wars, atrocities, dehumanizing discriminations, our greed and neglect of everything around and within us. The industrial waste and pollution is readily visible, yet the suffering that rests deep in our consciousness is much more intractable and dangerous. Furthermore, the dominant worldview of Western style industrial civilization sees the environment and its resources in terms of how it can satisfy our greed and economic self-interest. So, for the West to claim the world as theirs, the environment has become an extension of human egocentric needs and values - an *egosphere* rather than an *ecosphere*. In this *egosphere*, our preoccupation is that of consuming mindlessly in a global economy, controlled by the collective greed and power of some 200 giant corporations, driven by equally voracious shareholders. There is little regard for ecosystem balance or concern about the creation of increasing inequality and poverty between and within countries. And so we forget that we are part of an interconnected global system. To become ecologically literate we must learn to think about the *ecosphere* in terms of interconnectedness, context and process - the basic principles of all living systems. In doing so, we can transform the accumulated garbage of hatreds, neglect and anger so that they may become the compost for the garden

of the twenty-first century. The three main components of Failsafe in Consciousness are:

1. Innate Earth Wisdom
2. Counter Culture
3. Tipping Points in Consciousness

### **1. Innate Earth Wisdom**

Ninety nine per cent of our evolution as a species has been predicated upon a hunting and gathering adaptation known as foraging - a strategy of adaptation that rested on sophisticated ecosystem knowledge integrated into harvesting patterns and social organization though a spiritual understanding of the world. Foragers thus interfere the least with ecosystem resilience, as they know it must sustain them indefinitely. The combination of low energy needs, efficient management of the resource base and controlled population size, means that they minimally disrupt other components in their ecosystem. The fact that this mind-set prevailed for 99% of our evolution may provide some cause for hope, as the subliminal memories of this adaptation are stored deep in our consciousness and I believe they can act as a check and balance to the further deterioration of the global ecosystem. Just as Gaia is a dynamic system of information circuits arranged in feedback loops, so is consciousness. It is the radical remembering of this mind-set that will activate the feedback needed to prevent further degradation of the global ecosystem – the *Failsafe* notion.

### **2. Counter Culture**

For the corporate world, Paul Hawken’s 1993 book *The Ecology of Commerce* led the charge of re-evaluating commerce and redesigning finance capital. The design wisdom of nature is built into Hawken’s call for a Restorative Economy, which an increasing number of manufacturers are implementing. This has prompted the emergence of a genuine environmental capitalism as opposed to the corporate “green-washing” that followed the 1992 Rio conference. There is an emerging market for sustainable energy and those companies with the foresight to see it will be the ones that will succeed

in the second industrial revolution, particularly as fuel cell technology – which produces no emissions – is drawing considerable investment. From Gregory Bateson (1972) we have the critical notion of the Ecology of Ideas. He demonstrates how our modern context has rules that need changing, based on a critical understanding of cybernetics and ecosystems. He shows how ecology is a set of interconnecting feedback loops that include everything. When we destroy some of the interconnecting loops we have an ecology of ideas which reinforce other bad ideas. Bad, that is, for the health of the ecosystem and its components.

### **3. Tipping Points in Consciousness**

In popular culture the writings of Malcolm Gladwell – bestsellers *Blink* and *The Tipping Point* - have caught the attention of an unlikely audience. Business schools and corporate boardrooms are consuming his notions of simplifying agendas and making positive changes through small intuitive actions. His startling point is that social epidemics can spread when actions are placed within the right context, through the pull of certain strategically placed connectors. He endorses a form of instant mindfulness and changing consciousness in the inertia before a novel thought. Gladwell provides for pop and business culture similar ideas as Bateson, just in a different language. There are many others doing the same on the global stage.

There are over 40,000 citizen's groups, NGO's and foundations in North America who are addressing the issues of sustainability – ecological and social – in a comprehensive manner – and more than 100,000 such groups world wide. Civil society *is* mobilizing for environmental, peace and justice issues. The most surprising factor is that no one is in charge of this movement. It operates almost as a consensual anarchy. The groups share a basic set of fundamental understandings about the Earth, how it functions as an ecosphere, the necessity of equity and of sharing the Earth's resources for the good of all humanity. Are these simple ideas enough to refocus our attention and make counter culture

advocacy a reality for global citizens? The wide variety of organizations that are part of the anti-globalization movement and the emergence of alternative World Forums also feed off these cybernetic loops constituting a loosely defined counter culture. Gaia as metaphor was an inspiration that sped through the feedback cycles of this nascent movement, which objects forcibly to the effects and agendas of the corporate paradigm.

People are waking up, and there is light piercing through the shadows of corporate paradigms. There are many more inspiring groups and advocates for consciousness change, but the question remains is there enough of a critical mass that can be identified as a tipping point into a new level of consciousness? I remember many years ago in an audience with Sai Baba, the Indian sage, hearing him say to me that a transformation in human consciousness required at least 2% of the population to meditate on a daily basis. I have no idea what the knowledge source was for his pronouncement yet I do remember the “buzz” of energy in my body and mind when I heard it. So the identification of the many intricate and powerful feedback loops surely takes us closer to a tipping point in global consciousness. Gaia has entered contemporary discourse as scientific concept, metaphor and movement in consciousness change. Lovelock has demonstrated unequivocally where Gaia as scientific concept takes us; yet he has neglected to adequately examine Gaia as metaphor and movement in his cybernetic model. I believe these latter two components have sufficient interconnecting feedback loops to justify a Failsafe in Consciousness. Using Lovelock's own logic, we are fast approaching a tipping point with respect to inner ecology, the creation of a critical mass of humanity with views radically different to the corporate paradigms that currently regulate inter-human and human-planetary relations. Just as the external ecology of Gaia has tipping points so must the internal ecology of consciousness, for they are totally interconnected whether we realize it or not. With irreversible changes in the planetary web of

life, and the dramatic and catastrophic environmental changes that are ensuing, it appears that there is now only one strategy available:

**Change the collective human consciousness.**

Why? So that clarity, understanding, and compassion provide the bedrock for human response to the impending crises. How? By entering into a practice of meditation and self-healing that cultivates the energy of mindfulness in our consciousness. This was actually the appropriate solution before, yet the promise of various environmental strategies obscured the significance of this solution.

**Life: A Walking Meditation      Anne Fleming**

*A little mediation on life, which arose quite spontaneously during a frustrated 'walking meditation'!*

Life begins with *purpose*; the drive to reach into the unknown. The future, although it grows out of the past can never be known. All life travels from the known to the unknown each moment. By simply being with each moment as it moves, purpose is achieved.

Intimately entwined with purpose is *faith*, which is acceptance that the unknown can be reached. It beckons with each inhalation, and is accepted with each exhalation. Faith is simply the act of accepting each new moment as it arises.

The fabric on which the metaphysical weaves its rich tapestry of creation is the gift of the physical elements. *Water* releases constraints. Every cell needs hydration. Life's potential awaits the release that water brings, from rainfall to tears. *Space* provides room to nurture life's appetites. All living things require space to grow - and in the consumption of space, friction and restraints are created. *Heat* liberates life's expression. Where there is friction, there is heat - and response to that heat creates opportunities to change. *Wind* powers movement, scattering particles, seeds and

sound. From the solar winds that determine weather to the breath that fills our lungs, wind governs the motion of life.

*Light* illuminates it's nature. Exposed by the sun's radiance, the infinite poem of life is reflected in all its glorious manifestations.

The Muse: How could there be any question of acquiring or possessing, when the one thing needful for man is to *become* – to *be* at last, and to die in the fullness of his being. *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

**Ocean Waves at the Scientist's Retreat  
John Garland**

I feel grateful and privileged to have listened to and been in the company of a truly extraordinary human being, Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese (Zen) Buddhist monk who founded Plum Village, *le Village des Pruniers*, in the early 80s and who now at the age of 80 is still leading the *Sangha*, the community of monks and nuns established there. This village consists substantially of 3 hamlets, 2 for the nuns and one for the monks and retreatants are quartered accordingly. I found the first two days somewhat difficult. Knowing nobody, having a rather vague idea about a retreat, it was something of a shock to find oneself in a dormitory in a restored farm outhouse with 9 others (three of whom were heavy snorers) in the midst of a wider gathering of about a 1000 – mostly non-snorers. Almost all had been on previous retreats with Thây (as Thich Nhat Hanh is called) and unlike myself were familiar with the daily routine and practices of the community.

The day started at 5.00am with gong strokes resonating over the hamlet, rousing all from sleep and inviting all to the first sitting meditation at 5.45. At 6.30 there was breakfast. The (total) silence that began at 9.30pm the previous evening continued through until the washing up of the breakfast dishes. At 7.30 we were bussed to New Hamlet on two of the days – about 35 minutes away. On 3 days we walked through beautiful countryside to

Lower Hamlet, which was closer at hand and on the Friday we received in our Upper Hamlet the others for the teachings of the week. Every day this was at 8.30am and consisted of a 2 hour talk by Thây on an aspect of Buddhism related to the main topic of the retreat which was 'consciousness' particularly aimed at scientists working in the field of neuroscience. The talks were preceded by the nuns and monks chanting, setting a calm, attentive and expectant atmosphere. Only if you arrived before 8.00am did you have any chance of a seat near the front. The talks were split into 2 parts – a shortish one on the main theme directed at the children (about 60) and then the main talk focusing on the way the Buddha sees the mind and how this relates (or doesn't) to science. Thây's English intonation and cadence, a slight deafness on my part and a lack of familiarity with specific Buddhist notions meant that I had some difficulty in following, particularly initially. However, this did not seem to matter in the sense that what you absorbed by your heart and awareness were 'seeds' that should 'manifest' in the fullness of time.



After the talk there was chatting, milling around, catching up, but, as throughout the day, this would be punctuated by a bell when all stopped and fell silent for some moments. At about 11.15 there was walking meditation till noon. Then we returned to our hamlet for lunch. Thereafter was free till 3pm when there was working meditation (mainly in

silence but interspersed with some simple songs) and the 'family' that I was in - Ocean Waves - chopped huge mounds of vegetables. At 4.30pm we sat together in our 'family' and discussed the talk and our reaction to it. At 6.30pm we then ate together in silence followed by some free time till 8pm when there was a certain variety throughout the week – more meditation, some meetings on topics, a sort of 'talent show' where the Ocean Waves put on a hilarious skit poking fun at themselves (and everyone else) listening to a dharma talk; and on the last evening a formal 5 Mindfulness Trainings Transmission ceremony. I did hardly any meditation but was most likely the exception. Nobody bothered me about this. The majority of participants were either practicing Buddhists or familiar with its precepts. There were about 80 to a 100 bona fide scientists, I think. Otherwise people came from all walks of life, many from the social sciences, many doctors, psychiatrists, engineers, business, mainly but not exclusively in the 40 to 50 year bracket. In my Ocean Waves family, soon known to all as the Wonderful Ocean Waves, I enjoyed in particular the company of a film locations director from London, a physicist active in Buddhism in Cambridge, an Italian sociologist, a young German Fine Arts lecturer, a London anesthetist, a Canadian lecturing in Public Health in the Middle East, an Irish Engineer, a young monk from California and our Scots-Canadian dharma teacher who skillfully facilitated our group. From a rather hesitant and wary getting-to-know-you start it eventually flowed beautifully into a sense of openness and friendliness that was heart warming.

It was a week without sugar and salt, IT, TV, cookies, Coca Cola, newspapers and all the other common stimulants. Nature, lotus blossoms, the rolling vineyards of the Dordogne, the clouds and occasional warm breezes were the backcloth to a day where mindfulness was center stage. The community reflects much of the basic teaching of Thây – pleasant, calm, mindful, well organized, helpful, open and non-dogmatic. Thây himself has a

dignified, ascetic but friendly manner. His erudition is astonishing. His accomplishments are now legendary and yet he remains simple and modest, living in a log cabin in one of the hamlets, owning little but possessing the hearts and minds of those who come to know him.

### **The Buddha as Ecopsychologist**

The Buddha could be considered the first Ecopsychologist, as this quote from the Dhammapada reveals profound insight about the consequences of our mind-sets:

*We are what we think.  
All that we are arises with our thoughts  
With our thoughts we make the world.  
Speak or act with an impure mind  
And trouble will follow you  
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.*

*We are what we think.  
All that we are arises with our thoughts.  
With our thoughts we make the world.  
Speak or act with a pure mind  
And happiness will follow you  
As your shadow, unshakable.*

### **Peace Prayer Day 2006**

Ottawa Friends for Peace invite you to celebrate peace at the fourth annual Peace Prayer Day on Saturday, October 21, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, at City Hall – Elgin and Laurier. Internationally known recording stars Snam Kaur and Guru Ganesha Singh Khalsa will perform for a full hour, including their medley of chants from many faiths. Canadian musician Bruce Cockburn will receive a Peace Award for his work for peace and social justice with Unitarian Services Committee of Canada, and Betty-Anne Daviss will be honoured for introducing modern midwifery practices around the world. Bruce and Betty-Anne will present their Visions for Peace. Friends for Peace is a coalition

of groups committed to raising awareness about peace, social justice and planetary care. Pine Gate Sangha is the nucleus of this coalition, which also supports local organizations like Child Haven International, Peace Camp Ottawa, Multi-Faith Housing and the campaign to expand the mandate of the Canadian War Museum to include the creation of a culture of peace.

On the day there will be singing, dancing, and drumming with performances by Pipers for Peace, Every Woman's Drum Circle, Nubia Cermenio, Raging Grannies, the Skylarks, Big Soul Project, and many more. There will be interfaith prayers for peace, a silent auction, great food and beverages, and a chance to meet others who stand for peace, work for peace, and live for peace. Admission is free and all donations and proceeds from the day will go to USC Canada. Why should you go? Snam Kaur and Guru Ganesha, international recording stars, will be there to open the afternoon's proceedings at 1.00pm. That's why. Bruce Cockburn will be there – not to sing or play the acoustic guitar but to receive a Peace Award for his sterling work with USC Canada. That's why. So you can enjoy and participate in a celebration of peace, social justice and planetary care. That's why. Come and participate with the choirs and dancers in this multi-faith, multi-cultural extravaganza for peace. Support our children and students as they roar for peace prior to the Peace Awards ceremony. Enjoy the kitchen fare provided by retail outlets and restaurants throughout the city. Bid for bargains from the silent auction, be sure to make a donation as the day is free of charge and browse the tables set up by peace, activist, environmental and yoga groups. This is not a day to be missed. Mark it on your calendar – Saturday October 21, Ottawa City Hall, 10.00am – 4.00pm: **Peace Prayer Day Ottawa 2006.** [www.friendsforpeace.ca](http://www.friendsforpeace.ca)



We Are One Universal Community We Are One Universal Community We Are One Universal Community

# Peace Prayer Day



**Building bridges in times of peace and times of war**  
**Journée de Prières pour la Paix**

**Saturday, October 21, 2006**  
 10:00 - 4:00, Jean Piggot Place, Ottawa City Hall

Peace Awards to Bruce Cockburn and Betty-Anne Davis

by donation

<p><b>Morning Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Pipers for Peace</li> <li>* Every Woman's Drum</li> <li>* Nubia Cermeno</li> <li>* Raging Grannies</li> <li>* World Council of Religions for Peace</li> <li>* Adam Solomloan (on acoustic guitar)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Afternoon Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Snatam Kaur and Guru Ganesha</li> <li>* Big Soul Project</li> <li>* Souper Jazz Band</li> <li>* Michael McCulloch: Peace Troubadour</li> <li>* Emily and The Skylarks</li> <li>* Dances of Universal Peace...and more</li> </ul>
---	---

Lunch available - Silent Auction - Social Activist Exhibits

Info: Contact Ian at 726-0881 or [iprattis@cyberus.ca](mailto:iprattis@cyberus.ca)  
 or go to [www.friendsforpeace.ca](http://www.friendsforpeace.ca)

Supporting the UN and Other International Peace Processes

We Are One Universal Community We Are One Universal Community We Are One Universal Community

## Sr. Truc Dieu

Sr Truc Dieu is a Vietnamese nun in Lower Hamlet, Plum Village. She was informally “adopted” as a daughter by Ian several years ago and now regards Ian and Carolyn as her western family. This interview and photograph are from the June 2006 retreat in Lower Hamlet, Plum Village.

*Good morning Ba Ba, how are you today. I am so happy to have you as my friend and “ba ba” in the west and I am grateful for your presence here in Lower Hamlet during the retreats in Plum Village this summer – the 21 day retreat on the Breath of the Buddha, the Summer Retreat and the Neuroscience retreat. My name is Truc Dieu and I am 32 years old. I have been a nun for 13 years now. At the age of 19 I asked my parents for permission to be ordained as a nun in Saigon. They supported me wholeheartedly. I was raised in such*

*a loving family with six sisters and my parents. Four of my sisters are following the Buddha’s footsteps as nuns, just as I do. My elder sister is married with children and lives in Da Lat. My fifth sister is staying with my parents and taking care of them in Quang Nam, Central Vietnam. We all lived together under the same roof for many years. All my sisters are very skilful and responsible and my father is someone who I love so much. He is a noble and skilful farmer for all of his life and loves my mother and us very much. He dedicates his life for all of us. My mother did not have the opportunity to go to school but she knows how to live as a loving wife and a mother to six daughters. Her morality and example are in me and I miss her very much. I will go back to Vietnam soon and will see my family after these years in France at Plum Village. I will visit my temples there, also my monastic classmates from before. After that I will stay at home for three weeks to take care of my parents. Later I will go to Prajana Monastery – a new monastery established in Vietnam by Thay – to be with my younger monastic brothers and sisters.*

*Living in the west, I have learned many things and experienced people as very friendly and easy to interact with. I like the straightforwardness – that if people say “yes” then they mean “yes”. Even though there are many different cultures and nationalities that come together to practice mindfulness in Plum Village, they still overcome the gap of language and culture and accept each other easily. I would like to learn to speak English and French much better so I can communicate more freely with them. I like to go to church also and observe the old architecture in this part of France. I love this place very much.*

*At present I don’t feel ready to receive the Lamp Transmission from Thay as my practice is still growing. For many retreats now, the other sisters and me have made post cards, cookies and cakes for sale to support the hungry children project in Vietnam. We picked all kinds of wildflowers and we laminated them onto cards. I wrote the calligraphy*

*on the cards and they were very popular with friends at the retreats. We enjoyed very much making these cards as it helped a worthy cause.*

*I am so happy that I met you and to have you as my western Ba Ba. Thankyou for all the Pine Gate newsletters you send and the CD of Pine Gate Meditations. I share them with my sisters in Lower Hamlet. With Sr Carolyn I remember the first impression I had of her when I showed her how to make tofu. She was so open and interested and just lovely with me. It felt as though I had known her for a very long time. Thank you for all the love and caring you have extended to me. I will never forget you both because you are like my parents who I love very much. Goodbye for now Ba Ba – give my regards to your family and to everyone at home in the Pine Gate sangha. They are lucky. Thanks for your love and kindness on remembering my birthday also. I treasure the special card. Please come and visit me in Vietnam – I expect to be there for two years.*

*A lotus to you.  
Sr Truc Dieu*

*“Ba Ba” is the Vietnamese word for father.*



## **Lazy Days of Summer 2006    Emily King**

The end of summer is a funny time; seasonally it begins to prepare us for the fall and the end of another year, but as school starts and workers return from holiday, it also represents a new beginning. So as this season of beginnings and endings approaches, what better a time to look back on Pine Gate Sangha's Lazy Days of Summer program, and get ready for the upcoming fall agenda?

The summer is a time when Pine Gate's resident dharma teachers, Ian Prattis and Carolyn Hill, take a well-deserved break and hand the leadership duties over to the Sangha body. It is at once a laid back and magical time. Many members are busy with holiday and family so one never really knows who will show or with complete certainty what the topic of the evening will be. Flexibility and fun are the beauty of Lazy Days! It is a time when the seeds of leadership, stewardship and camaraderie that we plant and nourish among our members have a chance to flourish. We can truly experience the fruits of practice by enjoying the joyful giving and expertise of our fellow Sangha members.

With both Carolyn and Ian attending the June 2006 21-day retreat at Plum Village in France this year, the summer session started earlier than usual, but there was lots of ground to cover! Vivian Dickie, Paul St. John, Nadia Nesrallah, myself (Emily King), David Kroeker, Raphael Therrien, and (upon her return from France) Carolyn, all offered a selection of their expertise and facilitation skills for the occasion. Topics included healing sound, shamanism, reiki, qi gong, chanting, breathing, deep relaxation, singing, energy medicine and more! The summer would not have been complete without the ongoing meditation training of dharma dog, Moksha. She has made great progress and, occasionally, provides comic relief as well. We'll make a meditator of her yet! Of course, it is with profound sadness that we say goodbye to Moksha's older sister, dharma dog Nikki. She will be greatly



missed by all who knew her, but has touched us all, and will live on in us.

A season of both joy and sadness, and that brings us to the end of another successful summer session at Pine Gate Mediation Hall. The fall offers an exciting agenda with a study of the June 2006 21-day retreat on “the Breath of the Buddha,” a fall hike, and our much anticipated Peace Prayer Day on October 21<sup>st</sup> at Ottawa City Hall. I look forward to breathing with all of you soon!

### **Letter to a Suicide Bomber    Ian Prattis**

*Thay asked participants at the June 2006 retreat in Plum Village to write a letter to a suicide bomber.*

My young friend in the Middle East, it may come as a surprise for you as a potential suicide bomber to receive a letter from someone who could also be a suicide bomber. If I believed in a cause as deeply as you; if I and my people had been oppressed and humiliated as yours; and if there seemed to be no other way to serve my people and to send a message to end things – I too could strap explosives to my body and make of myself a living and dying bomb.

I am 64 years old and live in Ottawa, Canada. I am the father of 6 children, the grandfather of 10 grandchildren. As an elder and soon to be ancestor, it is my deepest hope for my descendants to meet with your descendants in the spirit of friendship. This is unlikely as you may choose not be here for that to occur. At present my heart is wrenched by the suicide bombing in your country; doubly so because it could easily be me in your place doing exactly the same thing. However, I choose to act differently, mostly because I am surrounded by different circumstances and conditions, though I do recognise the threads of compassion and service that run through such an action that you are presently contemplating. At the Peace Song Circle on Parliament Hill in Ottawa that I help to organize

since the outbreak of the Iraq war, thousands gather to be peace and protest war. A Muslim children's choir sang a song titled “Give Children A Chance.” It was composed by a 10 year old Lebanese girl during their civil war. It was sung in English, French, Hebrew and Arabic. These children, so innocent and precious, penetrated every heart so that we breathed in PEACE and breathed out RECONCILIATION – for our children, our grandchildren and for ourselves.

I know that you and your people have suffered deeply; that hate and revenge are justified and encouraged, thus making the action to strap explosives to your body and detonating them to kill others seem like an inevitable step. But do you know that members of the Ottawa Peace Council, of which I am a part, have in the past felt exactly the same way as you? They are from Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Canada and Native American origins. We talk together, eat breakfast together and often cry together, yet we are all united in a determination to find peace together.

I have found an alternative to violence. Although we are separated by geography, religion and culture – we are not really separated at all. I feel deeply your despair, anger and fear, but I feel just as deeply the possibility of hope, understanding and compassion that is also there. One project we have put forward is to unite Ottawa and Jerusalem as twin Cities of Peace. Canada is a peaceable nation and its capital city – Ottawa – is the centre of government and by twinning Ottawa with Jerusalem we can surely learn so much from one another. I am lucky to have found a way of life where my anger, despair and fear are not encouraged to be acted out. Rather, the understanding and compassion that rests in both of our minds is encouraged to come to the surface.

And so I work for peace every day of my life. Not just alone but with my community of spiritual practice – the Pine Gate Sangha in Ottawa, Canada. I work with the Ottawa Peace Council, which has

Palestinians and Israelis, Muslims and Jews along with people of other faiths and traditions. I learn so much from my Palestinian friends on this council who were born in refugee camps in the Middle East; and from Israeli friends on the same council who now seek only peace and reconciliation. Every year we bring young people from the Middle East to a Peace Camp in Ottawa and do our best to create bridges of understanding and compassion between groups that hate one another. We build an environment that nurtures dialogue and interconnection, which reveals that everyone's suffering is similar. We also create lots of fun with canoe trips, sports and putting on a joint concert in Ottawa.

Peace is our birthright – yours and mine – yet the way to it is not through suicide bombs and counter attacks by the state. Being Peace is the way to peace. My friends and I have created a coalition of many groups in Ottawa, known as Friends for Peace. Check it out if you like at [www.friendsforpeace.ca](http://www.friendsforpeace.ca) This is a consciousness raising coalition that also supports peace initiatives on the ground. We also organize annual celebrations of peace that bring the cultural and religious diversity of our city together. So before you or your friends strap an explosive belt to your body – please I implore you – talk to me and my friends in Ottawa. We are doing our best to understand and I ask you to help us in this regard as we are dedicated to peace processes, however difficult.

Without this commitment to the alternative to violence I could be as you – reaching for the belt of explosives and finding a place to detonate it that can cause most damage to the enemy. A long time ago I learned that the “enemy” is also part of me. So to take care of me, I do my best to also take care of you, because you are not my enemy and I am not your enemy. The weapons available to us both are those of understanding, communication, compassion and love. Let us use them as best we can. This is the true way of the Prophet

Mohammed, also the true way of Jesus and the Buddha.

Can I help to create a better environment of understanding and communication? Can you help me to understand better? Your wisdom about this would be gratefully received. We are brothers and sisters after all.

### **You Are Not My Enemy Marc Ian Barasch**

*This is an excerpt from “Field Notes on the Compassionate Life” by Marc Ian Barasch.*  
[www.compassionatelife.com](http://www.compassionatelife.com)

A child of the second *intifada*, Amal never met Jews who don't wear fatigues and combat boots. “She's one of the generation that ‘did not know Joseph’,” says Melodie Feldman, the calm American psychologist who founded Building Bridges. She has been putting together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers for the past ten years with no other agenda than to place them in a seedbed of compassion, and hope they grow. Feldman, who had been an Orthodox Jew and staunch anti-Palestinian until visiting East Jerusalem in 1989, was inspired to act after seeing first-hand the mourning and despair among the youths of both sides. She designed a camp-style retreat for young women whose only goal was to shatter the stereotypes of “The Enemy”. What resulted is a sort of living lab of peace-making, its protocols developed through trial and error.

The next morning, one Palestinian girl confided how soldiers had come to her home, beaten her family, and upon discovering they were mistaken, left without an apology. Using a technique known as compassionate listening, Feldman asked a Jewish girl to repeat the story in the first person, then describe the emotion it had made her feel – terror, anger, revenge, sadness. The Palestinian girl burst into tears. “My enemy heard me!” The Israeli girl wept with her. A few of the kids have been to other programs – “youth diplomatic corps – one put it a

little sarcastically, the kind where issues are debated and coexistence extolled. But Feldman doesn't want them to coexist; she wants them to care about each other. She's insistent on keeping it personal. Fine, she tells them, keep your hate, if you must, but now just touch her hand, her face, look into her eyes, speak with your heart. These are kids who have yet to pick up a weapon, but their minds are already locked and loaded, ready to go off half-cocked.

Feldman will try anything to get them to drop their canned historical laments and encounter each other as people. They make life masks out of plaster, moulding the wet goop over each other's faces, tracing the unknown contours. She gets them to form a soft machine by connecting to each other with motions and sounds, or sit in a circle singing songs, patting their own legs and those of their neighbours in a blur of rhythm. The singing, the touching, and the laughter help them, when they sit in small circles and the hard ugly things are dragged into the light, to see each other without the suffocation of blanket judgements.

### **Letter to the President Thich Nhat Hanh**

August 8, 2006

To the Honourable George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington D.C., USA

Dear Mr. Bush,

Last night I saw my brother (who died two weeks ago in the USA) coming back to me in a dream. He was with all his children. He told me, "Let's go home together." After a millisecond of hesitation, I told him joyfully, "OK; let's go."

Waking up from that dream at 5.00am this morning, I thought of the situation in the Middle East; and for the first time, I was able to cry. I cried for a long time, and I felt much better after about one hour.

Then I went to the kitchen and made some tea. While making tea, I realized that what my brother had said to me is true: our home is large enough for all of us. Let us go home as brothers and sisters.

Mr President, I think that if you could allow yourself to cry like I did this morning, you will also feel much better. It is our brothers that we kill over there. They are our brothers, God tells us so, and we also know it. They may not see us as brothers because of their anger, their misunderstanding, and their discrimination. But with some awakening, we can see things in a different way, and this will allow us to respond differently to the situation. I trust God in you, I trust the Buddha nature in you. Thank you for reading.

In gratitude and with brotherhood,

Nhat Hanh

### **This Day is This Day**

**Emily King**

This day is this day  
And none other

So look closely, friend, and deeply  
For it will seem the same in so many ways  
As so many days that have gone before it

Waking the same  
Walking the same  
Working the same

But this day is this day  
And none other

So breathe in the fresh about today  
The air on skin, a different breeze  
And food different too  
Though it may be made

By the same method, by the same hand

Because this day is this day

And none other

Savour it then, this breath  
The sweet taste of home  
A new and wholesome honey  
From a different flower, from a different bee  
A different you, a different me  
Than yesterday or the one before

For this day is this day  
And none other

### **Beautiful Flower      Nadia Nesrallah**

*A poem written for Emily on her birthday*

Beautiful flower  
Bright, vibrant and full of life  
Standing tall in a field among friends  
You emanate peace and joy  
The sun shines on you  
You embrace its warmth  
The rain tickles you  
You welcome its greeting  
The other flowers in the field  
Shine brighter by being around you

Healing flower  
You have this way about you  
Strengthening our stems with words  
Our leaves are greener because of you  
You've created a community of flowers  
Blooming together  
With gentle doses of tough love  
We dance together  
Singing songs to the lakes and rivers  
Making memories, we laugh, we smile

Friendly flower  
Eyes singing with joy  
Your smile shines with warmth  
Your voice soothes the garden  
Melodies wash over the meadow  
Raining down like food for our souls

Nurturing us with your love of loving  
Your leaves ready to envelope  
The next to need a hug

### **Autobiography in Five Chapters   Portia Nelson**

*Excerpted from the book: the romance of self discovery There's a Hole in my Sidewalk by Portia Nelson. An excellent collection.*

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost.....I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I'm in this same place.  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

#### **CHAPTER THREE**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in...it's a habit...but  
my eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

I walk down another street

**My True Job in Life      George Bernard Shaw**

This is the true job in life,  
 The being used for a purpose recognised by  
 yourself  
 As a mighty one,  
 The being a force of nature instead of a feverish,  
 Selfish little clod of ailments and grievances  
 Complaining that the world  
 Will not devote itself to making you happy.  
 I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the  
 Whole community and as long as I live it is my  
 Privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die,  
 For the harder I work the more I live.  
 I rejoice in life for its own sake;  
 Life is no brief candle to me,  
 It is a sort of splendid torch  
 Which I have got hold of for the moment,  
 And I want to make it burn as brightly  
 As possible before handing it on  
 To future generations.

**Transformation      Trish Johnson**

The bud to the rose  
 Grows slowly,  
 Never appears overnight  
 A process needs to unfold  
 Petals swell  
 And open to the sun  
 When ready  
 Beautiful and Bright

Fragrance like nothing else  
 Everything has a season  
 A color  
 A scent  
 A tone  
 Energies birthed,  
 Blend, meld,  
 move and morph

Exchange among  
 All things living  
 And when spent  
 The petals drop back to the Earth  
 Offerings  
 For the cycle  
 That begins again  
 And continues to Infinity

Meditation  
 Focus  
 Voluntary Simplicity in everyday life  
 Greater Peace with every mindful Breath  
 Reach out and be blessed

*Sept 2006 –inspired by Ian’s Dharma talk –  
 ‘transformation’*

**Nikki 1991 – 2006**

Our dharma dog, Nikki, has passed away - on Friday, August 26, 2006, in the loving arms of Carolyn. Nikki would have turned 15 in September. She spent her entire life bringing joy and happiness to everyone she met. Her gentle spirit and loving nature were a natural refuge for children, especially if they had cookies, and for friends who were suffering and needed to hold a paw or cry into her curly black hair. Her secret was that whatever the season Nikki would greet each morning the same way – with sheer joy. Before her morning business, she would sniff the air, woof a greeting to the squirrels and bounce with happiness, leaping off the back deck with her ears flapping as she raced round the garden. If only we all could greet each new day in that manner – fully in the present moment!

I first met Nikki when she was a puppy, even then a majestic, black standard poodle. My pet wolf had died earlier that year and I felt I could never get close to another animal. Nikki, however, had other ideas. She put her nose on my knee with complete understanding and compassion for my loss. She



looked into my eyes and insisted – “You will love me!” – and she was correct. As a dharma pet she was hilarious. She meditated with the sangha and in dharma discussions she would join the circle and listen intently to each person sharing, her head cocked to one side in deep concentration. In the silences she would often punctuate proceedings with a none too delicate burp that would have everyone rolling with laughter – or a toot from the other end, which had those close to her pinching their noses. Every sangha member has a different Nikki story. My favourite refers to a Christmas sangha gathering some years ago when a sangha member was teaching a new song. A friend beside her had a large cookie in her hand and Nikki followed the cookie with her nose until the trajectory of the hand gestures accompanying the song was right next to her snout. The cookie was gently liberated much to our friend’s surprise - patience, concentration and insight for that perfect moment of timing. She also loved bagels and we learned early on never to leave her in the car with shopping bags, as a dozen bagels were simply a nice snack for her. Her penchant for chewing gum enabled her to open purses and delve into pockets. To her delight, one evening she found tomatoes in a tote bag, which she very much enjoyed. She was adorable and lives on in our hearts and memories.

This autumn, in a ceremony with the sangha, her ashes will be sprinkled on the flower beds in our garden. So her ears will flap and bounce once again with the morning breeze through the peonies, evening primroses and tomatoes. When Nikki was aging into a grand old lady, I bought Carolyn another standard poodle puppy. We named her Moksha, though perhaps Tsunami would have described her better as she was a wrecking ball in the house and garden. Yet this summer, perhaps in anticipation of Nikki’s passing away, Moksha has settled into meditation and has taken on many of Nikki’s splendid qualities – albeit grafted onto her high-octane character. A happy continuation of our much loved friend. Here is a song to Nikki, written by Carolyn for our dharma pet.



#### *My Best Friend*

*She’s black, she’s curly and she wags her tail, Nikki is her name  
With big brown eyes and a cold wet nose, Nikki is my girl  
She greets me at the door, “ruff ruff” she says,  
I’m happy you are home  
Take me for a walk” ruff ruff” she says,  
she’s half way out the door  
Oh she can be calm and gentle,  
She can be playful and spunky  
But always she’s faithful to me  
She’s my best friend, and her name is Nikki, Nikki is my girl.*

For a photo of Nikki in her prime please go to  
[www.ianprattis.com/cv.htm](http://www.ianprattis.com/cv.htm)

**Talks and Retreats this October with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| October 15, 2006   | Public Talk "Failsafe: Gaia, Science and the Buddha."                    |
| George Mason University Law School<br>Arlington, Virginia  |  |
| <b>Contact:</b> Dr Martin Ogle                             | <a href="mailto:Potomac@nvrpa.org">Potomac@nvrpa.org</a>                 |
| October 21, 2006   | Public Talk "Ambassadors of Peace"                                       |
| Ottawa City Hall<br>Peace Prayer Day                       |  |
| <b>Contact:</b> Carolyn Hill                               | <a href="mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com">Chill@TierneyStauffer.com</a> |
| October 27 – 29, 2006                                      | Order of Interbeing Aspirants Retreat                                    |
| The Sanctuary<br>Long Bay on Bob's Lake,<br>Near Perth, ON |  |
| <b>Contact:</b> Carolyn Hill                               | <a href="mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com">Chill@TierneyStauffer.com</a> |

**PINE GATE SANGHA FALL STUDY SESSION: September – December 2006**

**SATURDAY SEPT 2**

**5.00pm – 7.00pm**

Thursday Sept 7

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Sept 14

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Sept 21

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Sept 28

Nutriment

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday October 5

7.00pm – 9.00pm

**SATURDAY OCT 7**

**10.00am – 1.00pm**

Thursday October 12

7.00pm – 9.00pm

**DHARMA TALK "QUO VADIS – WHERE ARE WE GOING?"**

**Pot Luck Vegetarian Supper**

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part I: Breathing – Art of Healing

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 3, 2006

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part II: Breathing – Art of Healing

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 3, 2006

Deep Relaxation

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part I: Identify Your Source of

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 4, 2006

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part II: Identify Your Source of Nutriment

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 4

**FALL HIKE IN GATINEAU PARK**

**Gather at Parking Lot #7, Kingsmere, Quebec**

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part I: Concentration, a Practice of Compassion

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 7, 2006

Thursday October 19

7.00pm – 9.00pm

**SATURDAY OCT 21**

**10.00am – 4.00pm**

Thursday Oct 26

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Nov 2

7.00pm – 9.00pm

**SATURDAY NOV 4**

**10.00am – 4.00pm**

Thursday Nov 9

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Nov 16

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Nov 23

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Nov 30

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Dec 7

7.00pm – 9.00pm

**SATURDAY DEC 9**

**5.00pm – 8.00pm**

Thursday Dec 14

7.00pm – 9.00pm

Thursday Dec 21

7.00pm – 8.00pm

**SUNDAY DEC 31**

**9.00pm – midnight**

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part II: Concentration, a Practice of Compassion

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 7, 2006

**PEACE PRAYER DAY**

**Ottawa City Hall at Elgin & Laurier**

Fruits of the Practice Tea Ceremony

A Celebration of Peace

Film Night

**DAY OF MINDFULNESS**

**Pine Gate Meditation Hall**

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part I: Looking Deeply, Freeing from Notions

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 8, 2006

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part II: Looking Deeply, Freeing from Notions

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 8, 2006

Questions and Answers with Thich Nhat Hanh

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 6, 2006

Chanting and Mindfulness Songs

Thich Nhat Hanh. Part I: Writing Letters and Insight

Breath of the Buddha Retreat, June 9, 2006

**CHRISTMAS GATHERING**

**Pot Luck and Christmas Carols**

Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Ceremony

Quiet Sitting and Walking Meditation

**NEW YEAR'S 14 MINDFULNESS**

**TRAININGS RECITATION**

**Pot Luck and Whooshing Wishes into the Fire!**

**DIRECTIONS:** Take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the crescent round to 1252 Rideout Cr, home of the Pine Gate Sangha. Christmas lights and reindeer grazing on the front lawn in the winter, lovely flowers for you in the summer.

**CONTACT US:**

**Tel:** 613-726-0881 **Email:** [iprattis@cyberus.ca](mailto:iprattis@cyberus.ca); [Chill@TierneyStauffer.com](mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com)

**Website:** [www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm](http://www.ianprattis.com/pinegate.htm)