



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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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.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings

Ian Prattis

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, with 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. Taking refuge in this deep manner is the basis of all dharma practice, which enables the practitioner to

transform the energy of past negativity and step onto the path of liberation and create no further harm.

The mindfulness trainings provide a different road map for peace, a different view of politics, conflict resolution and planetary care. The implications of the Buddha's teachings apply fully to the aftermath of 9/11. Our world needs guidelines like these to live by. Embracing the Buddha's awakened mind in the trainings is taking refuge in the Buddha. Extending it to our society and environment is the foundation of Engaged Buddhism. 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. 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 so that they are 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, so that

if you wanted to truly touch the Buddha and Dharma you had to do so in the Sangha.

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 new leadership, responsibility and care 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 instant 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, with each sangha operating organically as a cell in the new manifestation of Divinity on Earth. This is a statement of practice and is our greatest gift. We can offer our teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, gifts of great wealth or of property for monasteries and centres, but these gifts pale beside the gift of offering to our teacher our deep practice of the mindfulness trainings.

Beginning Anew

Anne Fleming

The Sangha is each one of us. It may look like a group, but it is one body. It may present many expressions, physical characteristics, intellectual, economic and cultural manifestations, but it is one being. I was forcibly struck by this insight at Pine Gate's Beginning Anew ceremony on March 17, 2005. Listening to the sharing by different voices, faces, concerns, and expressions of gratitude in each member's unique style allowed me to truly bring my mind home. Creativity is not an expression of novelty, but a continuation of an expressed commitment. The language of that commitment results in the act of creation – whether of a new being or a new body of extension. The combined expression of clarity, integrity and continuation extended from the teachings of the Buddha through Thich Nhat Hanh, through Ian and sangha members fully present last night in the massed body of the Pine Gate Sangha. I “saw” and felt this continuation with a sense of wonder – so this is the Pure Land I have heard about and never understood.

Sitting in the ‘outer’ circle, in a position of excluded-inclusion, I was able to feel and witness it. The Beginning Anew Ceremony and the presence of the sangha as one body clarified for me the third jewel – taking refuge in the sangha and finding the Buddha and the Dharma there. I had not fully

understood this. At the Beginning Anew ceremony, by simply being present, I touched the suchness of



Pine Gate's reality. And because of the engaged component of that reality, expressed by so many friends, I had the language to articulate that experience to my husband Gordon when he returned home from his tennis match. He understood fully. The experience enabled me to articulate its meaning to a loved one. Thank you Pine Gate sangha.

The Muse:

Page 129, ‘Transformation at the Base’, Thich Nhat Hanh:

‘If we believe that the oak tree is standing outside of us in space and time, independent of our mind, we need to look again’.

Anne Fleming, Deep Reflection of the Source, practices with the Pine Gate Sangha in Ottawa, Canada.

Renewing the Spirit of Orpheus

Peace Song Circle 2005

Tricia Diduch

For the third consecutive year, Friends for Peace welcomes local residents of all faiths and cultures to celebrate peace through song at Ottawa's annual Peace Song Circle on Parliament Hill. As the Greek god Orpheus' power of song and music was able to charm the creatures of the underworld,

including Pluto, the god of the underworld, and even the Furies, such that their cheeks were wet with tears, the Peace Song Circle strives to inject peaceful and healing energy into our community through dance and chants.

Upholding and supporting Canada's status as a peacekeeping nation, the Peace Song Circle seeks to provide alternatives to war. The event celebrates peace and harmony within ourselves, our community, our nation and the world. Participants are not protesting against war, but are celebrating for peace, creating an environment of solidarity in which we can become peacemakers by first establishing peace in our own heart. Recognizing that the healing energy of music can transform our habits of neglect, anger and indifference and have a positive impact on our consumption, our political and economic priorities, we lift our voices to "Sing for peace, stand for peace and be peace". Just as the music of Orpheus' lyre dissolved the hardness of the stones, disarmed the fiercest of attackers, and earned him the chance to bring his beloved Eurydice back to the world of the living, this year's dynamic program promises to warm the hearts of all assembled and animate their spirits.

On Saturday, May 14, 2005 from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon we invite peacemakers from across the Ottawa region to assemble on Parliament Hill to revive the spirit of Orpheus as they groove to the rhythm of musical performances presented by youth artists Will and the Beat Preachers, percussionists Every Woman's Drum, and sing along with local choirs, including Just Voices, the Unity Choir and the Spencerville choir. Capping off the program, Taizé and the Sacred Dance Guild will generate an atmosphere of healing and renewal that remains long after the Circle ends. This year, Friends for Peace welcomes local peace activist Murray Thomson, who will share his vision for peace. As Co-founder of Project Ploughshares, a peace education program focusing on disarmament and development, President of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Founder of Peacefund Canada, Mr. Thomson has worked tirelessly in raising awareness of the local and national peace movement and represents the core

values promoted during the two-hour long event. Joining Mr. Thomson in sharing a vision for peace is local church leader, Reverend Josette Jackson who is the minister at Unity Church. She has initiated a month long vigil for peace as part of her church's ministry.

Friends for Peace is a coalition of meditation, environmental and peace groups, creating inclusive multi-ethnic, inter-faith events such as the annual Peace Song Circles and Peace Prayer Days. Its primary goals are to bring together the community, to acknowledge and support the value of local social activism, and to explore the inner expression of peace through song, dance, drumming, meditation and art.

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www.friendsforpeace.ca

Singing as Meditation

Linda Ehrichs

I first heard about singing as meditation at Plum Village in France last summer. A British woman in my 'dharma family' named Ana, had just come from a meditative retreat centre at Taizé, in central France. Plum Village is in the southeast near Bordeaux, some hours away by train. Ana had seriously caught the singing bug and was looking for others to join in making harmony. This evolved into an informal evening singing group, which would meet on the lawn outside the library after supper. These experiences made some of my best memories of this stay at Plum Village. After coming back to Ottawa, I wanted to continue this singing practice.

So when I heard a Taizé weekend retreat was being held at St. Paul's University in February here in Ottawa, I signed up. The meditative services were held in the breathtakingly beautiful chapel, bathed in yellow light and filled with some of the prettiest sounds the human voice can make. The meditative and transcendent quality of Taizé singing comes from its simplicity, its repetition, and its consciousness of its origin and end in silence. Most songs consist of one-line prayer-like lyrics and

simple melodies. Even those who feel they “can’t” sing (like me) may change their minds (like me) and end up doing rather a lot of singing. Many Taizé songs hold a special affinity with the Buddhist tradition, depending to some degree on how one interprets them. Two of the most popular are “Dona Nobis Pacem” which means “Give Us Peace”, and “Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est” meaning, “Where there is love/charity, there God is.” Repeating these simple phrases allow the words to penetrate deeply. One doesn’t have to expend mind-energy on trying to remember them.

Taizé comes from the Catholic tradition, so the lyrics sometimes refer to Jesus and to God. For me to integrate these with my spirituality, I interpret the notion “God” less as an omniscient patriarchal force, but as “process” or “the unfolding of all”. For me, Jesus was a man and a teacher like the Buddha. He had a special way of communicating to human beings new ways to live and practice that would move them away from the more brutal and cruel side of their nature, towards love and compassion. I see many similar messages between the teachings of Buddha and Jesus but find the latter can be interpreted too literally and fall back into polarizing Christianity and other religions.

While Taizé comes from a Catholic-Christian tradition, I find its form – song and meditation – is accessible to a hybrid or mosaic spirituality. Another special aspect of Taizé singing, is that the one-liners are sung in many different languages – English, French, German, Spanish, Latin, and more. They become a vehicle for augmenting cross-cultural understanding and spiritual practice. If the sound of Taizé appeals to you, you can attend a Taizé service at St. John the Evangelist church (SE corner of Elgin and Somerset Sts.) on the first Sunday of the month, 4-5 pm. The service consists of about 20 minutes of singing, 10 minutes of silence, and another 20 minutes of singing. You can also check out www.taize.fr. Taizé songs will also be part of the program at the Peace Song Circle, May 14, 2005, 10am-12noon on Parliament Hill.

Making Peace

The Walking Society: www.camper.com

There cannot be lasting Peace
without fuel democracy.
There cannot be socio-ecological democracy
without solar economy.
The Sun can feed our vital desires but the
contamination of fossil fuels
holds our future in a state of red alert.
The advent of economical solar energy,
renewable resources and independent energy
can only be reached with a personal
and collective commitment.
A commitment that is in favour of investing
in renewable technologies and frugality.

We make war with our brethren
because we are incapable of making
peace with our environment.

Dharma

Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche: Shambhala Sun,
March 2005 p 29

The reason we practice dharma is to learn how to work with our minds. Dharma teaches us to look at our mind and become familiar with it. It teaches what our mind is made of, what patterns are, how it goes out of control and threatens us as well as others. In essence, dharma cultivates our intelligence. It allows an intelligent person to come out from behind the habits, impulses and reactions that normally dominate the mind. We particularly need to work with our minds during difficult times, when our mind is not friendly, when it frightens us. Then when the momentum and power of our “mind gone wild” begin to stir, we won’t become like a feather in the wind.

Mindroling Trichen Rinpoche: Shambhala Sun,
March 2005, p 39

The essence of dharma lies in being true to oneself (one’s innate nature) and in exerting great effort to

be courageous. When truth and the courage to walk on the path of truth are joined with mindfulness, a practitioner truly begins to practice the dharma. Until these qualities of truth and courage are generated, we will be vulnerable to our own pretences and fabrications. The arising of truth and courage allows us to realize the core essence of dharma. Not understanding this leads us into the trap of endless cyclic existence. A lack of courage keeps us from being true to our buddhanature. Both virtuous and non virtuous actions are formed in the mind. Actions – though more apparent – are secondary to our motivation. Even an apparently virtuous action is of little benefit if the root of our motivation is selfishness. Any action performed with wisdom and selfless motivation is an expression of our own buddhanature

Patience

Pema Chodrun

Extracted from her article “The Answer to Anger” in Shambhala Sun, March 2005

Patience has a quality of enormous honesty in it, but it also has a quality of not escalating things, allowing a lot of space for the other person to speak, for the other person to express themselves, while you don't react, even though inside you are reacting. You let the words go and just be there.

This suggests the fearlessness that goes with patience. If you practice the kind of patience that leads to the de-escalation of aggression and the cessation of suffering, you will be cultivating enormous courage. You will really get to know anger and how it breeds violent words and actions. You will see the whole thing without acting it out. When you practice patience, you're not repressing anger, you're just sitting with it – going cold turkey with the aggression.....Developing patience and fearlessness means learning to sit still with the edginess of the energy. It's like sitting on a wild horse, or on a wild tiger. There's a limerick to that effect: “There was a young lady of Niger, who smiled as she rode on a tiger. They came back from

the ride with the lady inside and the smile on the face of the tiger.” Sitting with your discomfort feels like riding on that tiger, because it's so frightening.....

The path of developing loving kindness and compassion is to be patient with the fact that you're human and that you make mistakes. That's more important than getting it right. It seems to work only if you're aspiring to give yourself a break, to lighten up, as you practice developing patience and other qualities such as generosity, discipline and insight.....You see all these people who are losing it, just like you do. Then you see all these people who catch themselves and give you the gift of fearlessness. You say “Oh wow, what a brave one – he or she caught themselves.” You begin to appreciate even the slightest gesture of bravery on the part of others because you know it is not easy, and that inspires you tremendously. That's how we can really help one another.

Tsunami

Thich Nhat Hanh

When an accident happens to a part of the planet Earth it happens to the whole planet, and together we bear it. When we see that their suffering is our own suffering, and their death is our death, we have begun to see the no-self nature. When I light incense and pray for those who died in the tsunami disaster, I see clearly that I am not only praying for those who have died; I am also praying for myself because I, too, am a victim of that earthquake. We ourselves have died, too..... We also have to renew and better ourselves, because karma is collective. All of us, to some extent, have contributed to the collective karma. A disaster that happens to any part of our planet earth or the human species is something for which we all have to bear responsibility to some extent. When others die, we die; when others suffer, we suffer. When others are in despair, we are in despair. That is the insight of no-self.

Deepak Chopra

One of the very interesting things that happened with the tsunami was, no animals died. The elephants. The hares. The rabbits. The birds. They were so tuned in to the forces of nature that they escaped. They ran. Some of the elephants broke their chains and ran to the high level mountainous area where the tidal waves could not reach. We have lost that connection. Is there a way that we can collectively transcend to a level of consciousness where we see that the turbulence in our collective mind, possibly, is inseparable from the turbulence in nature? Because we are part of nature..... the idea here is that if we quiet the turbulence in our collective mind and heal the rift in our collective soul, could that have an effect on nature's mind, if nature has a mind? The Gaia hypothesis says nature does have a mind, that the globe is conscious. So a critical mass of people praying or a critical mass of people collectively engaging in meditation could conceivably, even from modern physics point of view, through non-local interactions, actually simmer down the turbulence in nature.

Bill Clinton

I thought about all our religious traditions and how they all teach us how we are not really in control, but we don't really believe it until something like this happens, and it reminds us all to be a little more humble and grateful for every day.

Terry Schiavo

Upaya Zen Center – Roshi Joan Halifax

Human life is precious, and naturally we want to prolong life in any way we can. On the other hand, death is the natural outcome of life, and, in Buddhism, considered to be the greatest moment of liberation. As Uchiyama Roshi reminds us: losing is enlightenment. Roshi Joan noted that Terri Schiavo engendered profound compassion in the hearts of many as they considered her plight. Great suffering and dissension also arose in the face of confusion about what would really serve: to prolong life at any cost or to let life go. Fifteen years have passed when reconciliation between Michael Schiavo and Terri's family might have happened. In the end, Terri became a victim of sectarian differences.

Roshi noted that our practice asks us to accept the unacceptable, again and again. There seemed to be no good and merciful solution in this tragic circumstance. When asked what she would do, she answered: offer mercy to all; she also said that she would try to feel the heart of Terri Schiavo and ask what would she really want, what would be the most merciful outcome. She also was clear that this was not a solution, but if it had been her daughter, mother, or sister, she would not have sought legal help but pastoral and psychological help to resolve the confusion. Finally, she reminded us all that we should take care of our lives and our families by making our wishes clear and legally binding regarding living and dying. Terri Schiavo's death left a large and complex legacy. She asks us to consider the legacy our death might leave, and prepare well so that others may avoid unnecessary suffering and confusion.

A Special Winter's Day

Lori Hollohan

Walking into the familiar meditation hall, smiling, late, with a friend, taking a seat on the familiar meditation cushion, my sangha family already in deep meditation; the day of mindfulness had begun. We breathed deeply together, enjoyed the practice and benefited from the collective energies in the room. The day was off to a great start.

Breathing in the final deep breath of our meditation, we opened ourselves to absorb the dharma talk of our Dharmacharya Ian. Carolyn sounded the three bells and we listened attentively. Ian spoke of death and no fear, the practice of succumbing to death with no fear. His message resonated. He shared his story of near death in India and the ensuing peace that he felt while facing this, of the lessons he had learned. Also of the difficulty that Carolyn, his wife, faced as he lived through this spiritually deepening experience. I wondered why he felt he had this experience. I thought back to my time in Cameroon; my own experience, Malaria of the Brain, and the questionable care of the hospital that was looking after me. I remember the moment that the thought passed that I could succumb to death

from this illness, when I could no longer walk or bathe myself. Yet, I too felt peaceful, the thought just was and it passed. So too did my illness, also like Ian. The experience brought me back to my essence, stopped the noise in my mind, humbled me like nothing else could. I imagine that Ian's illness had a similar impact on him. I must ask.

We finished the dharma talk with three more sounds of the bell, stretched, took a short break and soon began a lovely Qi Gong class with Caroline. The movements were simple yet the energy that manifested was remarkable; other sangha friends delighted in the same. We were light in energy and mindfulness, the day was already reaping its rewards. Soon our formal lunchtime was upon us. We gathered in a long line to enjoy the vegetarian potluck feast, which all loving sangha hands had made. These meals offer so much nourishment; the good energy put into them resonates deeply on one's palate. We ate in the style of a formal lunch as in Plum Village, sitting across from our brothers and sisters. Ian, with gentle humour, brought us to look anew at the opposite sex on the other side, to look at him/ her as a brother/ sister, I smiled. We ate, we enjoyed. My friend played the guitar after lunch, we sang Plum Village songs, our stomachs digested in harmony.



Stepping into the cold, we began walking meditation, the cold mid-winter paths of Ottawa.

The air was refreshing, the day mild. Ian guided us and we found ourselves winding through nearby woods, feeding forgotten ducks, walking in mindfulness. The beauty of ice laden branches on passing pine trees penetrated, we enjoyed in silence. Someone at the end of the meditation line was playing around, dancing in the snow, enjoying mindfulness in her way; I know her well. Could it have been me?

We returned to Ian and Carolyn's home, the locale of Pine Gate Meditation Hall and enjoyed the second last meditation together, deep relaxation. Relaxing, smiling at the whole of our bodies, snoring began, (it was not Nikki- the dog!) we drifted away while remaining present. Afterwards, we laughed, bodies, minds rejuvenated. The day physically ended in a ceremonious hugging meditation. We were whole again. The energy that resonated transformed all in its midst. I remain truly thankful to the sangha body, the increased awareness, presence of all! Thank you wonderful community of practice, you have healed me again!

Thunder Beings Inipi Ceremony

Pine Gate sangha's third annual sweat lodge ceremony this winter was extraordinary to say the least. On a rain swept day nine members of the sangha travelled to a remote spot in the Gatineau Hills to meet the lodge keeper – Roy Barnes. Roy is trained in the Lakota Sioux tradition and on this day we were joined by four Dene chiefs from the Northwest Territories as well as by five members of Roy's First Nations community. Despite the relentless rain the fire heated the grandfather rocks beautifully and the ceremony began with blessings and purification. In the first round Ian was asked by the lodge keeper to explain the work for peace the Pine Gate sangha engages in and to extend a welcome to the Dene chiefs from the far north of Canada. One of the chiefs replied to honour Ian and the Buddhist community and their shared efforts for peace and reconciliation between traditions and cultures. There was an auspicious energy present that soon turned into a startling reality.

In the third round as the men offered prayers for the earth, thunderclaps exploded overhead and a

lightning bolt struck very near the sweat lodge. No one was hurt or injured but we all felt the ground shake underneath us – like a mini earthquake. The fireman tending to the rocks and wood for the fire later recounted how the lightning bolt turned the entire sky a bright yellow in the midst of the downpour. After the completion of the fourth round of the Inipi ceremony everyone emerged from the lodge a little shaken yet knowing something really big had taken place. In the weeks and months that followed, the lodge keeper consulted with elders, medicine people and other lodge keepers about the events this day. He was told that this was a Thunder Beings' lodge and was a mark of awesome respect for those gathered. Most elders had only heard of it in legend, never having experienced it themselves and offered honour to those who received this blessing from the Thunder Beings. May all remember and offer their gifts and service to all beings. All our relations.

Freeing The Terrorist Within

Anne Fleming

Reflections on “Despair” following a video of Thay’s Q & A during “The Feet Of The Buddha Retreat” in Plum Village, June 2004

Last night as I lay in bed, I contemplated the persistent terror of discouragement. This saboteur lies in wait for every little fluctuation in the fabric of my carefully ‘protected’ life. If the economy appears to be heading for a downturn, I get discouraged extrapolating the possibilities for financial ruin. If one of my kids appears to be under emotional stress for any reason, the possibility of relationship failure mushrooms in my mind like a toxic cloud. If I become aware of an ache or internal twinge anywhere in my body, I become overwhelmed by the inevitability of age-decline. Discouragement seeps into every cell. My breathing becomes irregular and my thinking resembles a swarm of bees without a queen to lead them.

Discouragement reminds me that I am a construction of all my past experiences. And not just those from my birthdate onwards. I am a product of many generations: physically,

emotionally, politically, and culturally. In becoming the unique individual I present to the world, I have dressed myself in all this generation without recognizing that each outfit demands attention, security and maintenance. As my visible world presents a tangible picture of the inner world of my mind, so the closets in my home are full of things I no longer need and my fridge always contains more food than I can consume in a week. When discouragement takes over, apathy follows close behind – tying up every possibility in bureaucratic red tape. In its purest sense, apathy means ‘absence of feeling or emotion’. In the thrall of discouragement, I want to be free of any emotion that will cause me to suffer. I welcome the terrorist because I do not recognize that the salvation offered by his manifesto will destroy me. I equate non-feeling with non-suffering and stoically await the liberating calmness that should follow. I have mindlessly attempted to nurture the flower of ancestral fortitude in an unlit cellar!

Each moment presents itself complete with peace and confusion, confidence and despair, mindfulness and habit. Each moment offers me a choice. As with each breath, there is both an ‘in’ and an ‘out’ – acceptance and release. But each breath includes something else as well – a pause before each inhalation and a pause before each exhalation. In that pause lies possibility. Recognizing, each moment, the potential in that pause is the gift of mindfulness. Every act, every thought, every reaction, every emotion has a beginning – the pause before it is set in motion. The elements of its completion are all there, swirling and churning like endless waves upon the shore. Mindful acknowledgement of that beginning offers me an opportunity to be fully engaged in the process. That simple pause before a word is spoken in anger, before an action is taken out of frustration, before discouragement sends out one tiny root can make all the difference in the moment’s outcome. Awareness in that brief pause of my persistent need to avert certain elements of that moment out of fear-habit is like sunshine dispelling the morning mist. In every moment the possibility to become discouraged is present along with the possibility to take heart and be joyful. And the key to activating

one or the other lies simply in recognizing that. The pause before the in-breath. The pause before the out-breath.

Strength to recognize the pause. Courage to breathe mindfully. Trust in allowing the possibility to unfold.

Emily's Song

Emily King composed this song for the all sanghas gathering on April 8, 2005. Accompanied by Marc Beland on guitar her soaring song gave voice to the purpose of the gathering. The sumptuous food, active silent auction, guest bard from Montreal-Joseph Emet – contributed to a wonderful evening of sangha fellowship. A graceful dance with mudras to the Heart Sutra brought things to a mindful close.

There is a Place

There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could

And it's called wondrous
 And it's called a sky of blue
 And it's called forgiveness
 And it's called for me for you

And it's called wondrous
 And it's called the still of night
 And it's called forgiveness
 And it's called the child's delight

And it's called wondrous
 And it's called the grass so green
 And it's called forgiveness
 Do you know this place I mean?

There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could

And it's called mindful

And it's called the bird in flight
 And it's called peaceful
 And it's called turning wrong to right

And it's called mindful
 And it's called the heart serene
 And it's called peaceful
 Do you see this place I mean

And can we transform what's in between
 Here and the world we've seen?

There is a place that I would go to if I could
 There is a place that I would go to if I could
 Let's get together we'll change this world for the good
 Let's get together to change this world for the good

The Guest House

Jallaludin Rumi

This human body is a guest house.
 Every morning a new arrival.
 A joy, a depression, a meanness
 Some momentary awareness comes
 As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all
 Even if they're a crowd of sorrows
 Who violently sweep your house
 Empty of its furniture.

Still treat each guest honourably;
 He may be clearing you out
 For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
 Meet them at the door laughing,
 And invite them in.
 Be grateful for whoever comes,
 Because each has been sent
 As a guide from beyond.

Dancing On.....

Patricia Bowen

The Sacred Dance Guild is an international organization that promotes sacred dance as prayer, and as a means of spiritual growth, connection to the divine, and integration of mind body and spirit. The National Capital Area Chapter, based in the Ottawa area is a local manifestation of the international organization. Our members live within a two hour radius of Ottawa and so include members from upper New York state as well as Canadian dancers. We welcome all persons who share a common interest in dance as a language of worship and celebration. The Guild is dedicated to dance as spiritual expression for enrichment of personal devotion and prayer, connectedness within communities of worship, acceptance and expansion of relationships with the Divine and each other, creative discoveries within the art form and its relevance to other religious arts, and religious education for increased interfaith understanding. The Guild's annual festival will be held at Connecticut College, New London, Connecticut from July 21 to 26. Many of our local members will make the journey to a special time for growth and connections with other dancers

The National Capital Area Chapter holds two or three weekend workshops per year. These events bring dancers with unique gifts and styles to Ottawa to share their work with us. We also have special "members only" workshops with dancers such as Margie Gillis and Zab Momboungu. In addition we publish two to three newsletters per year, which advise of the activities of individual members, their friends, and of the Chapter itself. This newsletter, Sacred Waves, connects us to a larger community of people who are interested in dance. And of course there is e-mail which serves to provide reminders and updates. Wendy Morrell, our Chapter President, sends a monthly update to members and interested friends.

We continually wish to expand our understanding of the creative and the divine as it is expressed by people. Therefore, we readily participate in peace activities where dance is one of the expressions of

peace. The Friends for Peace offers such an opportunity, which we readily accept. It is powerful indeed to sing and dance for peace. Another such expression is the monthly Taize service which is held at St. John the Evangelist church (at the corner of Elgin and Somerset Streets in Ottawa). Members of the Guild dance to the beautiful Taize chants. We are always grateful when Barclay McMillan and friends lead the singing. It is an expression of peace that can be understood easily. People appreciate a quiet hour once a month. It is a blessing to people in a busy world.

We welcome new members at any time and our common interest is interfaith understanding through dance. All levels, ages, sizes, and abilities of people are invited and welcome to join us in our dancing journeys. For further information please contact Wendy Morrell 726-1375 or Patricia Bowen 730-1018.

Practice for Some Change

Carol Crawford

When I was asked to write about my practice for the Pinegate Newsletter, I was really excited to tell you all about it because it has been such an amazing experience! To be honest though I was also deeply afraid. I've always been a timid, fearful person and I'll confess that writing is one of my biggest fears. It's not just the writing though. For as long as I can remember I've been filled with anxiety about pretty much everything else too. So you can imagine how thrilled I was when I heard at sangha about the possibility of diminishing fear through the daily practice of the Five Remembrances. It sounded so promising that I started doing it everyday and also added The Four Brahmaviharas Meditation when Ian invited us to try it out as part of our daily practice.

I was sceptical about my ability to stick with it but to my great surprise and delight I loved it so much that I actually looked forward to it each day. To my amazement, I began to see changes in myself quite quickly. The most incredible difference was that I began to connect with other people. This is

something I normally have a lot of trouble doing. My social fears inhibit me and I tend to isolate myself as a result. I've often felt like withdrawing from my own kids but now one of my greatest joys is the fun we've been having together. It was even a blast to have them home over the March Break. It's been an incredible gift to finally feel like I am part of something bigger than myself.

The meditations have also helped diminish some of my other fears as well. For example, I've been putting off going back to work because everything about it scares me. My brilliant strategy so far has been to stick my head in the sand and pretend I don't really need to work but lately I've actually been looking to others for help and checking out what my options are. I even attended a job fair at Carleton University. I know that doesn't sound like much but for me it's a huge step forward and if any of you out there can help me figure out what I want to do when I grow up, please help me out.

So far, I've written almost all my allotted five hundred words about how my fears have lessened because it's a biggie for me but I don't want to leave you with the impression that it's the only area in which I've benefited from my practice. I've also been having the most amazing insights, been more mindful in daily life, less caught up in emotion, and more creative, just to name a few. The bottom line is that I've seen so many positive changes in myself as a result of my practice that I recommend it to everyone I meet!

Thich Nhat Hanh in Canada

Five Day Retreat at Bishop's University, August 20 - 25, 2005

Carolyn Hill

Please join the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and his monks and nuns for a five day retreat and step into the Ultimate Dimension, the Pure Land, the Kingdom of God - that space within yourself where you rest in your true essence, your heart wide open with no discrimination, no fears, no attachments and no illusion. Thich Nhat Hanh is a Buddhist monk, teacher and author. After being exiled from Vietnam in 1967 for his peace-based activism, he

eventually established a Monastery in Plum Village, France where he teaches, writes, gardens and works to help relieve the suffering of all beings. In addition to offering retreats at Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh travels throughout North America, Europe and China offering spiritual retreats based on mindfulness. This summer he returns to North America after finally being able to return to his homeland and root temple in Vietnam where he extended his teachings for three months earlier this year.

Thich Nhat Hanh, known to his students as "Thay", meaning teacher, defies his age of nearly 80 years as he continues to write and teach with clarity, wisdom and humour. He exudes peace and serenity and is a true reflection of his mindfulness teachings, which have inspired hundreds of thousands around the world. He is a much loved and very effective Buddhist teacher in the west. His message is simple. Bringing peace into our own lives brings peace into our families, our communities and the world. Thay has a non-dualistic view of the world and encourages us to use the mindfulness teachings, the trainings and the practice to deepen and enhance our own tradition. Thay calls upon all religions to work together for peace and the creation of a better society. In addition to Buddhism, Thay was educated in Western Philosophy and Science. He believes in "living dharma" which means that the dharma must evolve for the times in which we live so that people can understand it.

The retreat and teachings at Bishop's University, August 20 - 25, will focus on the practice of Mindfulness. Mindfulness is being fully aware of each thought, each action in each moment, thereby being fully present in the here and the now. Facilitated by conscious breathing, we become mindful of what we are doing, be it work, eating, brushing teeth or closing doors. We become aware of each thought, of the way we speak and the way we listen to one another. Through practice we learn to look deeply into ourselves, which can lead to self-understanding and transformation. Thay says that the practice of Mindfulness "is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves. It frees the mind and when the mind is free the heart will naturally fill with compassion for oneself and

others". Mindfulness practice helps us to break down the sense of separation and puts us in touch with our true essence where there is no separation and no discrimination.

Thay's gift of living dharma to the modern world is through the practice of mindfulness in everyday life, which elicits compassion without limit. In keeping with the Buddha's original teachings, Thay wanted to extend the practice from the monastery into society. He wanted monks and nuns to confront social problems and contribute to the relief of suffering and to the betterment of human life. Thus the separation between contemplation and social action diminishes. This evolved into the form of Engaged Buddhism taught by Thich Nhat Hanh whereby he actualizes the original teachings of the Buddha to be pertinent to 21st Century realities of suffering. And so Buddhism is vivified, alive and vibrant in the new millennium. Thay is, however, very clear about the relationship between social activism and mindfulness. Activism alone does not have the inner resources to bring about effective social transformation. Personal transformation through mindfulness practice is the ground out of which activism emerges. For Thay practice precedes activism and in this way the relationship between contemplation and social action is a powerful manifestation of mindfulness in every day life. Mindfulness develops compassion but one must first look deeply into the suffering of oneself and of others to understand the causes and conditions. Looking deeply at the situation we will then see clearly what we can do to help.

Having the opportunity to practice mindfulness with Thay and his monks and nuns for five days, twenty-four hours a day, will certainly slow us down. We will set aside our multi-tasking and become present to each moment. We will calm our mind and relax our body. We will develop clarity, peace and compassion from which we can transform the causes and conditions, which lead to suffering. We will look at our wrong views arising from discrimination, judgment and illusion. Freedom from wrong views will bring us joy and happiness in the reality of life as it is. We will look at our afflictions such as craving, anger, jealousy, ignorance. We will water and cultivate our

wholesome positive seeds such as love, compassion, kindness and generosity to take care of and lessen our unwholesome seeds. When we do so, we will create boundless love and equanimity, from which we can then serve living beings and the environment. Through mindfulness practice we can also transform the cycle of birth and death by freeing ourselves from our desires for fame, profit, power and excessive sensual pleasures. In the Pure Land, we live in such a way that our energy takes us in the direction of love, peace and liberty.

A dharma door is being offered to you. As we open the dharma door to the Pure Land we begin a process of purification as we practice all day long and receive the noble teachings. To open the door we aspire to leave behind suffering and find peace, joy and happiness. We need to have confidence that our suffering can be transformed through practice, and we need to practice in a concrete way, dwelling in the present moment in mindfulness.

Retreat Details - Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec, August 20 - 25, 2005

Please take this opportunity to immerse yourself in the presence of a true Master, an awakened being. You will be guided to slow down and cultivate the art of dwelling in the present moment in mindfulness. The practice will include sitting and walking meditation, dharma talks, discussion groups, mindful eating, tea meditation and many other practices. This will be a wonderful time to rest and rejuvenate yourself as you practice with the support and guidance of a whole community.

The retreat - "Touching Peace, Finding Inner Freedom with Understanding and Love" - is offered in the French language with simultaneous English translation. Particulars are as follows:

When: August 20 - 25, 2005

Where: Bishop's University, Lennoxville,
Canada

Costs:

Single Occupancy \$680.00

Double Occupancy \$580.00 each

Students/Teens \$400.00;

Children 6 - 12 years of age \$195.00

Payment: Credit Cards accepted
Programs: Program for adults in French with simultaneous English translation
 Programs for children and for teens in French, English and Vietnamese
Registration: Green Mountain Dharma Centre
www.greenmountain.org
 Toll Free Telephone: (802) 436-1101
 Fax: (802) 436-1101
 Email: mtmaster@vermontel-net
 Mailing Address: Green MountainDharma Centre
 Attention: Bishop's Retreat
 P.O. Box 182
 Hartland, 4-Corners
 VT 05049, USA



Our True Heritage

Thich Nhat Hanh

The cosmos is filled with precious gems.
 I want to offer a handful of them to you this morning.
 Each moment you are alive is a gem,
 shining through and containing earth and sky,
 water and clouds.
 It needs you to breathe gently
 for the miracles to be displayed.
 Suddenly you hear the birds singing,
 the pines chanting,
 see the flowers blooming,
 the blue sky,
 the white clouds,
 the smile and the marvelous look
 of your beloved.
 You, the richest person on Earth,
 who have been going around begging for a living,
 stop being a destitute child.
 Come back and claim your heritage.
 We should enjoy our happiness
 and offer it to everyone.
 Cherish this very moment.
 Let go of the stream of distress
 and embrace life fully in your arms.

The Diamond Sutra and Global Warming

Ian Prattis

This speech was given on World Religions Day at Ottawa's City Hall in January 2005.

The Buddha was perhaps the first deep ecologist and environmental activist. 2600 years ago in The Diamond Sutra the Buddha taught that humans and nature are totally interconnected and that if we want to look after humans we have to look after mother earth. Just as important is that if we wish to take care of mother earth we must also take good care of ourselves. "The taking care of" is through meditation, the practice of mindfulness, the actualization of interbeing and being aware of the consequences of our actions. These aspects of meditation, mindfulness, interbeing and awareness with respect to the earth are found in many spiritual traditions. Yet neglect, ignorance and exploitation of the earth are the present order of the day whatever our spiritual tradition. In the Diamond Sutra the Buddha showed that the earth is part of us and the present day call from this teaching is to now make peace with Mother Earth. If we injure Mother Earth, we injure ourselves. Our civilization has caused such deep harm to the earth that we humans may soon become an endangered species, so we must change our ways by renewing the ethics of our spiritual traditions.

George Bush and Tony Blair have been looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. They ignore our civilizations' creation of the biggest weapon of mass destruction – Global Warming. This is created by our collective greed, produced by our industrial processes and consumerist madness. The result is damage to Mother Earth. The unprecedented heat wave in Europe of 2003 killed 20,000 people. 3,000 died in the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. I do not diminish that tragedy but point out that the rising sea levels produced by Global Warming will kill millions, displacing millions more. This weapon of mass destruction is far more dangerous than terrorism as it has the capacity to destabilize existing political and economic structures, which are totally out of synch with the earth's natural capital. A natural capital that is shrinking daily from the mindless environmental recklessness of our entire industrial civilization. We have all participated in the creation of this WMD. What could the 200 billion dollars recently spent on war in Iraq have done to alleviate Global Warming? It does not require anyone to be a rocket scientist to realize that military threats to our security and wellbeing are totally eclipsed by environmental collapse. We must change our ways and make peace with Mother Earth otherwise we will not survive. Our collective greed, mindless consumerism, industrial pollution and government irresponsibility obviously must change.

James Lovelock recently stated: “Global warming is the response of our outraged planet to the harm we have already done and the consequences for humanity are likely to be far worse than any war. We are at war with the earth itself.” This is a war we cannot win and to even come close to winning ensures our extinction. Such extinction may be much faster than we allow our minds to consider, so it is essential to concentrate our intelligence and insight on the real danger facing us. If there were an ancient ecologist on Mars observing the five mass extinctions that have taken place on planet earth over the past 500 million years, he would be amazed that right now one species, homo sapiens, is rapidly creating the conditions for its own extinction. I am sure such an ancient ecologist

would chide us all to take heed of the Buddha's Diamond Sutra and put it immediately into practice.

The tsunami in South East Asia urges us to come to a full stop and look deeply at the present condition of the human species. The human species and the planet earth are in fact one body – this is the basis of the Diamond Sutra. Our planet is suffering because we have lived together for so long with only neglect and ignorance about the earth. The earth is our mother yet we make our mother suffer deeply. Every faith and spiritual tradition, not just Buddhist ones, must renew their ethics and responsibilities and honour the interconnected nature of our species with mother earth. The solution is not political or economic – they are secondary. The primary solution is spiritual and requires an implementation of environmental ethics based on spiritual tradition. In keeping with the Diamond Sutra, Thich Nhat Hanh wrote *For a Future To Be Possible* in 1993 and based the entire book on the five mindfulness trainings. Chapter Seven of my book *The Essential Spiral* talks about Guidelines to Recreate our World and this too is based on Buddhist mindfulness trainings. These measures of an environmental ethics based on spirituality provide the way ahead. The alternative is that Mother Earth and Nature will provide the solution – only we will not be around to see it. It is much more intelligent to take heed of the principles laid out in *The Diamond Sutra*, to adhere to the ethics expressed in the *Mindfulness Trainings* and to renew a fully compassionate relationship with Mother Earth. The future is now.

“Love in Action – The Way Ahead”

with

Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

Assisted by

Carolyn Hill, Order of Interbeing

Southern Dharma Retreat Centre, North Carolina: September 29 – October 2, 2005

The Buddha’s foundation teachings are taken into everyday life during this mindfulness retreat. Mindfulness practice is an instrument to take deep spiritual experience into the society and environment we presently occupy, making it safe for future generations. We begin with the Buddha’s teachings on Love and become aware that in our troubled times, practical measures resting on solid foundations of meditation practice are needed to reduce the escalation of violence between individuals, communities and nations. Mindfulness and non-action based on love, compassion and deep listening are the foundations for action – the middle way - so necessary for our times. Specific methods to deal with healing, anger and suffering will be taught as well as methods to engage differently with our world. The schedule will include dharma talks, sutra readings, exercises, ceremonies, walking meditation and silent time with Mother Earth, as we learn to touch the seeds of that loving and compassionate nature that dwells within each one of us. There is a lot of silence in the retreat so that we may nurture deep compassion. From that energy we can go forward together in the twenty-first century to reconstruct the world. We begin with ourselves.

Gentle instructions and meditative silence will help us become more present as we address the root causes of suffering in our world and learn to cultivate the tools of compassion to transform suffering. The retreat culminates with a transmission ceremony of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and a sharing circle.

Costs: \$180.00/ \$90.00 deposit to SDRC; some scholarships available, vegetarian meals, dana basis for contributions to the teacher, beautiful location in remote, mountainous setting, part way up Hap Mountain in North Carolina – one hour NW of Ashville, N.C.

Contact: Southern Dharma Retreat Center

1661 West Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743, USA

Phone/fax: 828 622 7112

info@southerndharma.org

www.southerndharma.org

Registration: <http://www.southerndharma.org/registration.htm>

Pine Gate Sangha Lazy Days of Summer Program: June – August, 2005, every Thursday at 7.00pm.

Directions to Pine Gate: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit; Go to Baseline; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout – follow the crescent round to 1252.

613 726 0881

iprattis@cyberus.ca

Chill@TierneyStauffer.com

This three-month period provides an opportunity for sangha members to bring forward topics and practices suitable for the mandate of Pine Gate sangha, cultivating the seeds of leadership and responsibility for the community.